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# Battle of the Bains: Tactical Bathing in Two Expository Texts, One Film and a Novella

LeAnn Marie Lewis

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Battle of the *Bains*: Tactical Bathing in Two Expository  
Texts, One Film and a Novella

by

**LEANN MARIE LEWIS**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

THESIS

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In numerous articles and texts published within the arenas of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, much has been written on the trope of the shared bath-and even more specifically the *hammam*-as a space of orientalism. Although researchers such as Magreban sociologist Fatima Mernissi, Algerian writer Malek Alloula, and film scholars Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio and Elisabetta Girelli have offered images of *le bain turc* in expository texts, art and media, and films as those which offer “Turkish Dreams” of orientalist fantasy, this paper focuses on the space as a loci of performative strategies and tactical moves, which abet social resistance.

I argue that one can posit the *hammam*, and acts of shared bathing in two expository texts, a film and a novella as *riposte: Le bain turc* is as a pool of resistive, not passive, odalisques. In this work I draw on Victor Turner’s theories of Social Drama, and Michel de Certeau’s concepts of strategies and tactics. My intervention is that, despite often seeming orientalist, these baths also act as social spaces of politically reactive liminoid acts: “playful” insurgency. Female participants use “tactical bathing” to rebut patriarchal pressure and oppression, creatively.

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*Dans Les Mille et une nuits les scènes de bains sont le plus souvent présentées comme les rituels préparatoires d'actes de transition. Quand un voyageur pénètre dans une cité étrangère, quand une femme s'apprête à entrer dans un nouveau palais, quand un jeune homme va se livrer à une nuit de plaisir, chacun commence par se baigner -Fatima Mernissi, Le Harem et l'Occident*

*In complex, modern industrial societies, the general cultural affirmation (of rites of passage) is no longer available...here instead we find what Turner called "liminoid activities"... activities where conventional structure is no longer honored...By being more playful, more open to chance, they are thus, more likely to be subversive-*

Marvin Carlson

*If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, (and) what popular procedures (also 'miniscule' and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them only in order to evade them-*

Michel de Certeau

# **Battle of the *Bains*: Tactical Bathing in Two Expository Texts, One Film and a Novella**

## **Introduction**

Sociologists, anthropologists, literary and cultural theorists have long fixated on the trope of the *hammam*, and the shared bath in general, as orientalized by the West. Highly sexualized and untethered from reality, historically one can imagine it as the secretive dwelling of Ingres' Odalisque of *Le bain turc*, for example; not as only an arena of bathing but instead as a space of sensuality and hedonism; the den of a libidinous and cloistered other, "hiding in the deepest recesses...in lascivious self-abandon" (Alloula 78).

The painting's images of nude, lolling, idle women, sapphic posing and coffee are familiar figures in countless orientalist photos, postcards and paintings concerning *harems* and *hammams*. Malek Alloula's work *The Colonial Harem* speaks of the reduction of Eastern women to essential forms in these household quarters, as portrayed in orientalist art and media. "They" are coffee rituals, hookahs, images of sweetness, salacious poses, smoking, uplifted arms, bared breasts, voluptuous smiles....In being so, their greater "meaning stops dead in its tracks, mired on the surface" of the image (Alloula 98). They exist as if captured by the camera or painter's brush.

What strikes one, is the triteness and static, yet repetitive, nature of the scenes. Whether contemplating a certain pose, look, beverage or sweetmeat, one has viewed this image before. The Eastern domestic panorama in a photo, postcard, or Ingres' *Turkish Bath* are all the same: One views "a sort of masterpiece of genre...synthesis" (Alloula 35) of oriental tropes in these portrayals.

“Women pouring or sipping coffee, at times in startling acrobatic postures” (72) are spoken of by Alloula, in an essay of orientalist representations. One of course, views this again, in this tableau of the bath by Ingres. *Le bain turc* heavily borrows images directly from the “text” of orientalism: We see the familiar imbibing of coffee while stretching, posturing, dreaming and grooming seductively. I outline this, not because this is fresh information, but rather, to re-orient the reader of this paper to the historic legacy of the bath: When one encounters the *hammam*, it is in a long line of misrepresentations-whether by text or visual portrayals- which traverse from general to specific. These repetitions, combined, reveal Eastern women as reduced, in oriental spaces such as the *hammam* and *harem*, to passive symbols, in the most mundane manner.

*Le bain turc* was of course orientalist in inspiration: It was directly influenced by Lady Montague’s letters on the women’s baths of the East, which she had supposedly seen in her travels in the Ottoman Empire. Ingres even copied her description of a bath and used it for the painting’s depiction of the arena.

“I believe there were two hundred women there in all. Beautiful naked women in various poses... some conversing, others... drinking coffee or tasting a sorbet... many stretched out nonchalantly, whilst their slaves (generally ravishing girls of 17 or 18 years) plaited their hair in fantastical shapes” (Hagan quoting Montague 410-14 )

To this end, one of course would never argue that, in general, the *hammam* has not been, historically, presented as a heavily constructed social space via Western representation. Equally important, is the understanding that women of the East are shown as not resisting, in any way, their confinement, in orientalist bath scenes.

In reading Montague’s “Description of the women's bath at Adrianople” or in viewing *Le bain turc* or countless other orientalist texts focusing on the *hammam*, thus, one sees that it is similar to Bachelard’s houses; it as well could be considered as architecture of the *imagination*; the bath offered as a social space which “acquires an emotional sense by a kind of poetic process,

whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning (Said 55). By this I mean to state that prior anticipation of what one can “expect” from this bath could be said to overly influence the first viewing of it.

Partially created by the imagination of the viewer, it is influenced by the very narratives that have been formed about it. This is not just during the height of the Orientalist art movement when *Le bain turc* was painted, but still in modern times. Magreban sociologist Fatima Mernissi, for example, has devoted whole chapters of several of her books to exploring this “unrealistic” Western stereotyping of this bath, whose Orientalist images are “*totalement étrangères*” (*Le harem* 108).

Similarly, visual texts purportedly regurgitate this oft-repeated notion. The film *Hamam; Il bagno turco* (1997) by Turkish director Ferzan Özpetek, has been described as portraying the bath and Istanbul as a space of “transnational Orientalism” (Girelli 23) and a “textbook Orientalist representation resting on Western notions of Oriental difference (and) antiquity” (23-4). Even an Eastern filmmaker, thus, creating a fictional Turkish bath, is considered as unable to escape this net.

The *hammam*, therefore, is a social zone that may not have been confronted personally but has been encountered in skewed, repetitive images. As Said might have noted, this is a situation that is often approached with “a textual attitude”; in first confronting the bath in a novel or travelogue, or now movie or the internet, one is then prepared for the authentic space, whatever that might truly be.

However, is there a factual, shared, Eastern bath that one could analyze in a sociological manner without retreating back towards Orientalism to understand it? By this I mean, is there a neutral, entity encompassed by this othered one, which one could also observe and analyze?

Could the bath be viewed as a shared and tactical social zone and, moreover, even in literature or film where one also sees its image as orientalist? Could this bath be analyzed and spoken of without relying on this same accusation to simply explain it or interpret it: the presence of Orientalism? Might one, indeed, even use this factual bath to answer back to the orientalized one that seems to be so prominent in literature and film to understand more fully, what shared bathing, and an allocated bath-space “does”, besides mistakenly represent an Eastern culture and more often, the bodies and identity of Eastern women for Westerners? Could this space, moreover, be tactical and could women, in the bath, be shown as upending and resisting via the bath-using the bath as a “tactical” space of *riposte*- as opposed to the odalisques of the Orientalists who seem to exalt in their complaisance?

Furthermore, if there is indeed such a space (a neutral bath, conceptually) who would be considered to have the authority to image it correctly, if one considers it an arena which even Easterners are accused of orientalizing, such as a Turkish filmmaker? Although Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi, whose work will be explored in the first chapter of this thesis, also has tried to show the real bath in her representations of the *hammam* of her childhood in Fez, Morocco, she again, focuses mostly on two images. There is her “correct” one (authentic as viewed by a Muslim, Moroccan woman) and that “false” one of the West (Orientalist).

### **A passive bath or a tactical battle-ground?**

According to Mernissi, there is a reality in opposition to the *bain turc* of the Orientalist painters who, she argues, continually misrepresented it (and other Oriental social spaces contained in the harem) as a space of passive femininity.

“Vu par les Occidentaux ..... (c’est) totalement exempt de cette vision menaçante de la féminité et de son jeu politique.” (*Le harem* 35).

Her goal is to disassemble and reassemble this arena for Westerners and Easterners alike. Unlike the *hammam* of the Orientalists, where, she states, all Eastern womanhood is portrayed as reductive as *La Grand Odalisque*, that unreal

“oisive créature du harem dont les pieds n’ont jamais été souillés par la poussière, (elle) semble n’être la, passive que pour notre plaisir”(Le harem 110)

her bathers are active and express themselves politically via the *hammam*. By this I mean that, in her works, the Islamic concern of who is ultimately responsible and authoritative, over the care of the skin of a woman and thus, of course, her body (herself or patriarchy) will not be shown as a mere individual decision of hygiene. Rather it will become a broader issue of women’s rights and females asserting themselves via the social stage of a shared bath; “tactical bathing”. This is a feminist response towards those who influence, or attempt to interfere, with a woman’s bathing rituals and her bath products, and thus by dint, the small social zone where she still finds privacy. The shared bath as a tactical arena, is therefore, what this paper concerns.

This aforementioned battle is “political skin care” as her aunt jokingly coins it. As she states it, it is almost as if the skin were a territory “La peau est une affaire politique. Sinon, pourquoi les imams nous ordonneraient-ils de la cacher?”(Mernissi *Rêves de femmes* 217) This skin-politics is fraught with issues of who is allowed to write on, cover over, and thus create an image of Eastern female skin, even in a small harem household. In this thesis, I will sift through the deeper, tactical games played by participants, in and via, spaces of shared bathing. I will analyze seemingly descriptive anecdotes about bathing/images of baths in a comparative work on shared baths, mostly but not totally focused on the *hammam*, as presented in several texts and a film. Ultimately I argue that the shared bath functions as a tactical arena for rebellious expression in general, even if it appears highly orientalized. More specifically, this revolt, if you will, commenced by women, disrupts patriarchy in all these works. In focusing on this zone, I will use

performance theory, more specifically Victor Turner's theories on social drama and liminoid activities, and Michel de Certeau's concept of tactics and strategies, as well as other theorists such as Michel Foucault and Edward Said to lay a framework for viewing a shared bath as a liminal space, which is separate from society, yet intimately entwined with it.

Due to it being a space for unveiling, for relaxing, for speaking unguarded and privately, yet for also reifying societal norms (one sees both religious ablutions and individual acts of bathing here, in the "real" world baths, that reify hegemonic social structures, especially in the pools of Morocco and Japan which I open with), one can imagine how it could also be a social sphere replete with resistive acts: "liminoid acts". These are activities outside the "regular" world, which "introduce (and) explore different structures that may develop into real alternatives to the status quo...to provide a site for social and cultural resistance"(Carlson *Performance* 24). I will also outline how the bath becomes a temporary arena of "communitas", where there is a breakdown of social norms and restructuring of society on a micro-level. This latter, is Victor Turner's concept of communitas as an experience of togetherness during play and/or rituals that, temporarily, erases the status quo.

In the first chapter on non-fictional baths (two expository texts on shared baths and bathing rituals/anecdotes in Morocco and Japan) I will outlay my theories on how the pool functions as a "practiced" space similar to how Michel de Certeau views various social arenas; as those which can be utilized by hegemonic forces via "strategy". This latter is

"the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as a base from which relations with a...target or threat...can be managed" (35-36).

I would offer that the bath becomes just this type of "base" in the societies on which I focus, due to its being a loci where "traditional" acts of bathing are performed, such as, again, ablutions. Repetition of religious ablutions and "correct" bathing rites and acts, subtly, and also

obviously, re-define social strata and are attempts by hegemonic structures, to control a populace, and mostly women, in the bath. In noting that, in Mernissi's work, the bath is shown as a space where separation between genders in Islam "commences" (Mernissi *Rêves de femmes* 240) yet, it is also a place of "political skin-care", one sees that this base is where one can answer back to society. This would be via one's unique use of this shared social zone. This is, in fact, what one sees.

In this response, the bath is where "tactics relative to particular situations" (de Certeau 24) are used to rebut or even defy a "system's production, system, and verification of space"(24) as that which is conducive to maintaining societal order. "Practiced" zones, as de Certeau coins them, are terrains which can be used, by seemingly powerless individuals, to express dissatisfaction or acquiescence to hegemony but in a surreptitious manner. Precisely, in my analysis I focus on how bathers use the social arena of the bath to bathe political responses to hegemony which are not always subservient. I will then extend my arguments from real Maghreban *hammams* and Japanese *sentos* and *onsens* to the fictional baths of *Hamam; Il bagno turco*, an Italian-Turkish film and *Les femmes au bain*, a French novella.

To be more specific, my first chapter serves to establish what a "tactical" bath looks like physically and how it functions in two different examples and countries, Japan and Morocco, as both a space of submission and emancipation, respectively. By focusing on its physical layout and how the bath-space is utilized by bathers as a type of social stage to either reify or contest hegemonic systems, I will introduce the application of performance theory and de Certeau's framework to these pools to explain how they could be seen as tactical and performative arenas.

To offer one short example to elucidate my idea of a submissive bath: In one Japanese *onsen*, one sees rocks on which more authoritative persons sit, from which they can order

bathing underlings to refresh drinks, during an “office bath”, which is common in Japan ( this concept is colleagues going to a shared bath together). These stones are outcroppings that appear to enhance the natural beauty of the outdoor pools but now here one also sees performative bathing at play, which abets the maintaining of traditional Japanese social structure. The crags are used by the superior to underscore social stratification by their using the seat as a type of throne which visually separates them from others in the water, and puts them on a higher plane. From there they are able to survey and gaze over the office staff, like a king or lord, to issue orders and oversee a type of fiefdom. Thus this physical layout of the bath is exploited by the supervisor to “practice” it as a zone of intimidation. It is used to re-demarcate who is truly the overseer of a group in both a physical and a metaphorical manner, rather than being utilized as merely a bath.

When researching this specific social space of the *onsen*, one question that came to mind was: How could the bath be actualized by the *bather* in a manner that shows the bather, as de Certeau’s tactician, as also able to oversee a space as well, to “transform the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes”? (De Certeau 123). To put this latter question in a different manner: What role does “gazing” over the world of the bath, and being able to view bathers in the bath, as Foucault would state, “panoptically”, or to evade this gaze if one is a bath participant, play in controlling this space? This idea of gazing over bathers will also figure in Chapter Two in Özpetek’s film, where a distraught wife secretly watches her husband’s cuckolding of her in a *hammam*, and an exotic, Italian expatriate named “Madame” speaks of spying on male bathers in her bath, and also decorates it by mounting a type of maternal surrogate in the center of it with all-seeing eyes. This is a female statue which seems to oversee her bath, which serves a queer, male population. These will be the types of bathing

anecdotes/scenes on which I will focus. My analysis of the non-fictional bath and the questions introduced in the first chapter, thus, will be expanded upon in the subsequent two chapters on the fictional baths of Özpetek and Sebbar.

In the second chapter on *Hamam; Il bagno turco* I will underline how filmmaker Özpetek's Orientalist images of Istanbul and several Turkish baths in this work, which have often been focused on by critics and academics, most specifically to this paper in Elisabetta Girelli's article "Transnational Orientalism: Ferzan Özpetek's Turkish Dream in *Hamam* (1997)", connect to another aspect of Orientalism in the piece. This has been less examined by others. His employment of a vehicle common to the Orientalist project, "Persian Letters", in the narrative, not only creates an image of an Eastern bath and "The East" for Westerners, but also yields tactical games that characters play for redemption and these are connected to the bath.

In regards to the "Persian Letters" these are specifically missives to the West, written by a Western female owner of a gay, male bath in Turkey to her Italian sister. They are disseminated amongst other Western characters and they focus on lush Orientalist descriptions about the bath, and Istanbul that market it as a space of intrigue, emotional mystery and a zone where one can lose oneself to an unknowable East, but in the process gain emotional and sexual emancipation. Prior analyses of this film by others have not made mention, in depth, of these voiceovers in the film, of "Madame" reading her letters as a type of *Persian Letter*, and furthermore the connection has not been made between the Orientalism instigated by Özpetek as connected to tactical games. There have been articles mentioning game-play in this film, such as one sees in Serena Anderlini-D'Onofrio's "Bisexual Games and Emotional Sustainability in Ferzan Özpetek's queer films" but she identifies his use of Orientalism as "accented" and

“nostalgic”. There is no linking of his Orientalism to these missives which, I argue, are shown as abetting ludic moves between characters.

I additionally maintain in Chapter Two, that the film’s selective Orientalist cinematography (manipulative shots which portray Istanbul as pre-modern, which Girelli herself notes in her article), indeed creates Özpetek’s “Turkish Dream” of Istanbul as Girelli states, but they do something more. This culling of modern social landscapes in the film, broadens into a “Patriarchal Dream”. By this I mean that Özpetek’s cinematography outlays mostly male-only social spaces in the film. This selective representation of Istanbul as more inhabited and populated by men in public places, lays the battlefield for female characters in the narrative to contest this male domination of social space (a male-controlled *hammam*, and larger male-controlled city) and again, aids tactical games by them in the work.

In Chapter Three I focus on public narration as a performative strategy to incite female emancipation and “buy in” in Sebbar’s *hammam* in the novella. The bath, I argue, is overall portrayed as a salon for the re-telling and creation of De Certeau’s spatial stories. These are stories told of spaces which outline their history in a community: In the novella, the recountings often describe women doing cunning and subversive acts in baths. One thus, ends up with a bath-tale, told in a bath. Specifically, the folktales narrated in the bath-both fictionally augmented and historical- between female tacticians who bathe, concern the *hammam* and feminist, Arabic history and culture. Retelling of feminist narratives, and heated conversations in public in the bath between feminists and fundamentalist bathers who wish to crush burgeoning, emancipated thought processes brought about by this salon-style entertainment, reforms the humble bath into a zone of questioning. This then contributes to a reconfiguration of social boundaries for the

women, which shows them new possibilities for their lives to tactically refute Islamic, patriarchal oppression.

### **De Certeau**

As de Certeau states, a “tactical” approach to everyday manipulation of people, by larger social hegemony, is for a person/ “tactician” to use, manipulate and divert (social) space for their means, not a strategy’s (25). One of De Certeau’s most famous concepts is *la perruque*: the “wig”. As he presents it in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, this would be a worker utilizing company machines, materials, and above all, time, for oneself (25). Examples he gives are such as “borrowing” a lathe to create one’s own furniture or a secretary “borrowing” time from her desk, to write a love-letter (25). In this employment of “the wig”, a worker/underling does not become totally subsumed by strategy, but rather, is able to soldier on with dignity and will intact, even if society is unaware of this theft which psychologically bolsters the tactician. One could consider, thus, in this paper, tacticians (in this case bathers and also those who design and form the bath-space such as we see in the film, in the characters of Marta and Madame) as using a machine of religious or cultural hegemony (the *hammam/sento/onsen* and the proper way to bathe to cede to this authority) to instead, express defiance and creativity. They act out their own feminist needs, for self-expression and command of their own choices, by creating and managing their own bath, which, as one will see, reverberates into the outside world in all these works. I state that this is a “feminist” response, due to the fact that the women, and female characters, who tactically utilize these baths in all these works, are often quite consciously aware of their acts of subversion as attempts to equalize power differentials between men and women in greater society.

One now returns to several more questions that will guide my analysis of the baths. As formerly mentioned, these are such as: How might these real baths (Japan and Morocco) -and ultimately also the fictional pools (Özpetek's and Sebbar's pools) -be viewed as social zones of contestation where De Certeau's tactics and strategies interact, and where Turner's liminal spaces and liminoid activities occur? How does bathing "deep play" in the bath in all these texts establish "communitas" and what does this look like?

Aligned with this latter question are also more queries that will inform this thesis in general: How does "play" via the bath, illustrate De Certeau's ideas that everyday actions- in this case not walking but bathing- are a manner by which one can re-organize a social space and moreover, influence its use? Do bath participants also direct the tactical moves and appearances of these baths, as opposed to an Orientalist or Western hegemony that supposedly designs and controls the use of them, as Mernissi and others argue? And if so, could we state that, as the city's planned space, the shared bath as well is a De Certeauian one where the power to image it and utilize it is influenced by both hegemony and tacticians?

My first chapter serves to establish several key points which will be outlined and initially discussed and then expanded upon in the subsequent two chapters on the fictional baths of Özpetek and Sebbar.

## **Acknowledgments**

In the process of researching and writing this thesis I learned not only much about my subject matter, but also, considerable humility. A paper of this length, was, for me, quite intimidating and probably the most arduous task I have ever undertaken intellectually. The need to revisit original ideas, to clarify or question...the necessity to reformulate, restate in a more

methodical manner -or also completely jettison- arguments and concepts that I originally envisioned, was unwieldy.

With that said, several key original ideas did continue into the final draft; the most important being that the social space of a shared bath is a ludic arena of performance and politicized negotiation. I will be forever grateful to my thesis advisor Walter Putnam for his incredible patience in pushing me and accepting my confusion, and also Katrin Schröter, one of my professors and also on my committee, who helped pinpoint the correct terminology and theorists for the second chapter on film, specifically. I thank them both for informing me of so many works that strengthened my thoughts; the most significant being the introduction to de Certeau by Prof. Putnam, whose work deeply clarified my fragile ideas, and a reminder of how central Laura Mulvey's theories were to my argument in Chapter Two by Prof. Schröter. Additionally I would like to thank Prof. Lorie Brau who originally alerted me to Clark's work; a text that would have surely been missed, without her expertise.

I hope that this thesis will clarify how one could view several shared baths, whether in an expository work, or a film or novella, as more than just exoticized but rather, as politicized and resistive zones.

## Chapter One: The “Real” Bath

### **Bathing with intent in a liminoid, tactical, “real” hammam and sentō**

*In groups or alone, in steamy bathhouses, large outdoor hot spring pools and small private bathrooms, the Japanese immerse themselves daily in hot water. ....These ablutions do more than cleanse their bodies.....additionally the baths are imbued with meaning and symbols of Japanese culture-Scott Clark Japan: A View from the Bath*

*“Si les hommes me dépouillent à présent du seul domaine que je contrôle, encore, c’est-à-dire celui de mes produits de beauté, ils auront bientôt le pouvoir de contrôler mon apparence physique. Je ne permettrai jamais une chose pareille.” – Fatima Mernissi Rêves de femmes: une enfance au harem*

### **Tactical Bathing and “Playing” in the Bath: Theories**

Now that I have outlined the central argument and some of the questions that guide this thesis, it is necessary to more specifically underscore how Michel de Certeau’s framework for analyzing resistance and Victor Turner’s theories of social drama and liminoid acts can be applied to reveal the bath as a “practiced space”. This is a physical point where an everyday site is transformed with actions (de Certeau 117) which are not always the “correct” use of social space, to express resistance by tacticians (in this case, reactive bathers) towards those who utilize strategy (these being social hegemony). In doing so, besides becoming “tactical”, the arena also becomes a social zone of “communitas”. This aforementioned is Turner’s playful space of temporary equality between persons/forces of different social strata.

### **De Certeau: how a bath can become tactical**

De Certeau focuses on “the ways in which users, commonly assumed to be passive followers of established rules, operate in a social system. He perceives ‘tactics’ as the seizing of opportune moments by those who lack their own domain of influence... whereas he sees ‘strategies’ as power relationships based in institutions.”(Evans 23) To this end, tacticians are those who lack power, whilst strategy has, or embodies, power.

De Certeau notes that tactics are basically “manipulations”: they are the “innumerable practices...means by which users reappropriate” space which is part and parcel of a shared social system (Evans quoting de Certeau 23). Tactics are not just a response but more; they are a “way in which the weak make use of the strong...(to) lend a political dimension to everyday practices”(Evans quoting de Certeau 23). One can consider tactics present, therefore, in many daily acts with “rules” and norms of conduct, which seem to be apolitical at first glance, but later seem ripe for political expression; think skincare as a political act, as Mernissi’s female relatives view it or a simple stroll in public (see endnote 1). In regard to that last point of social rules, one understands that in the shared bath one must act correctly. It is overwhelmingly a socially polite arena of religious ritual and/or etiquette: There is “l’ordre strict” of bathing in Morocco (*Rêves* 228) and correct bathing practices in Japan are numerous. As Clark notes, in Japan children are “taught proper etiquette at the bath.” (80) Teaching of proper comportment in society begins from the space. However, aside from the correct way of bathing, the shared bath is an everyday space which offers tactics to be seized upon at an opportune moment to counteract the force of strategy.

To this end, similar to a sidewalk, the shared bath is also a highly visible social site and furthermore one which everyone uses frequently in these societies of Japan (it is increasingly becoming even more of a specialized social event, more varied, spa-like and glamorous than prior) and the Maghreb, as well as both in Istanbul (Ozpetek’s film) and the unnamed Muslim community in *Les femmes au bain* (Sebbar). As a sidewalk, additionally, it too is a visible space where the public, who shares it, knows who obeys the social rules that govern it and furthermore who does not. Thus it acts also as a type of politicized social stage, from which one can express

one's respect for societal rules or one's disregard i.e. encourage tactical self-expression via the space.

This former (tactical self-expression) is, to use an example from the bath, Mernissi's Aunt's inculcation when she instructs her niece on how to bathe to resist and "feel like a queen"; i.e. take care of her skin and wear carefully selected clothes, even for "no particular occasion", when they are enclosed in a locked harem where no one would appreciate this.

«Prends-en soin, hydrate-la, nettoie-la, frotte-la, parfume-la, mets tes plus beaux vêtements, même s'il n'y a pas d'occasion particulière, et tu vas sentiras comme une reine!....Si une femme se met à négliger sa peau, c'est la porte ouverte à toutes sortes d'humiliations » (*Rêves* 217)

This is resistive when one considers that the correct way to bathe is to focus on the religious aspect of the soak, not its beautifying aspect.

After bathing in their own chosen fashion, they feel powerful (they are "queens"), as opposed to enclosed, illiterate, disempowered housewives and adolescents in a harem, even if only they know this. Furthermore, Mernissi's Aunt argues that skin is as a door to a woman's self-esteem, "c'est la porte"; if one does not care for it, this opens one up for "all sorts of degradation" (*Rêves* 217). To this end one sees how an everyday steam in the bath performs one's self-regard in front of others. As they all bathe together with a fundamentalist Mother-in-law who oversees them, subservient wives and resistive wives (tacticians) can bathe their politics onto their respective skins by taking care of their skin and outwardly performing self-regard. By daring to affirm themselves in skin-care ritual, even in this hidden manner from the outside world, they thus tactically refute their enclosure in the harem in their own domestic sphere. In Mernissi's memoir these oppressed bathers express their (ironic) feminist wit, humor, and self-preservation brought to the surface, via making active, conscious decisions to take care of themselves: "Mais où ça (la beauté), à l'intérieur? Dans le cœur, la tête, où exactement.....La beauté est dans la peau !" (*Rêves* 217) Mernissi's aunt laughs. It is in this *peau*, she argues,

where true, complex beauty resides because through self-care of one's body, one announces, at least to oneself, one's feminist humanity not only one's objectification at the hands of men.

To this end, everyone knows that the respectful way to bathe in this society is to perform religious ablutions and *not* use bathing products that one's husband does not like (*Rêves* 221-222). This is to bow to convention. Thus, everyone would also know how not to use the bath. One indeed knows as well how not to use a sidewalk. Like the sidewalk's tactical user, therefore, bathers, those who deploy the "ruse", de Certeau's "network of anti-discipline" (Evans quoting de Certeau 23), can employ this "opportune moment" to bathe submissively or to rebelliously confront "strategies" i.e. convention/ expectations of hegemony by bathing in a different manner. In the resistive bathing which will be outlined in the subsequent pages, thus, oppressed women in Mernissi's bath could be considered as tactically using the space and Japanese bathers will be considered as bathing ludically, and occasionally tactically, but mostly in a manner which upholds hegemony.

### **A tactical bath in Morocco**

In Mernissi's memoir, the *hammam* becomes as De Certeau's factory of the lathe user in the Introduction or, to use the other metaphor in this chapter, the (in) correctly used sidewalk. I will first explain this with a short anecdote and then go into more detail further on.

The *hammam* is a social sphere where tacticians retrieve social space for their own means from hegemonic social forces, at least on a temporary basis (de Certeau 15); for, like the lathe users, bathers too can "steal" from the "correct" bath (a religious bath/ "strategy"), in that they use water and bath products from this bath to further their own agenda (enjoy a sensual, beautifying, defiant bath) rather than bow to Islam. In doing this they, as Mernissi puts it "bathe politically" (*Rêves* 215).

One sees this, for example, when Mernissi's Aunt- a frequent rabble rouser!- advises her niece that she might use the *hammam*'s bathing rituals to respond to oppressive Muslim patriarchy (react) as well as to support it (bathe with religious ablutions). She is advised to turn the daily act of 'correct' bathing into one of rebellion.

“Si la société est dure avec toi, réagis en étant aux petits soins pour ta peau.” (italics mine, *Rêves*, 215) “La libération de la femme commençait avec le massage et les soins de la peau.” (italics mine, *Rêves*, 217)

In using the pool to “react” to Islam via “political skincare”, by utilizing “*petit soins*” to remind themselves of their own value, the women manipulate the religious ablutions of the bath, to create their own baths. In grooming in this manner, they comfort themselves. They do not assuage a governing religious entity of imams, and Mother-in-laws, who expect them to be content with being submissive to strategy; to blindly follow all doctrine, whither it is to accept being literally locked up, unschooled, or to bathe in a certain manner. The enclosed women, to this end, use the opportunity of the bath to interact with, and defy, hegemony (patriarchal Islam and the overseeing males and females of the *harem*), but in a manner that is not overt.

Like the lathe user who uses *la perruque*, who “wigs” if you will, the goal in this *bolshi* bath is to not be noticed or at least not to be considered as seriously deviant so the bath becomes a space for self-expression but not outright defiance; it is under the radar. Yet to conduct *la perruque* in a satisfying manner, one must get that “dig” in, and/ or at least be psychologically buoyed by the “theft”. Later in this chapter we will see how the women use “uglifying” via the bath, to more overtly and amusingly respond to hegemony.

When analyzing/looking at the process of an oppressed woman in a harem choosing between bathing politically/i.e. feminist bathing and bathing “correctly”/i.e. religious rites and furthermore “reacting” and “commencing liberation” via skin-care, one sees that bathing in these memoirs is more than just mindless rote practice of culture/religion. The pool is instead mindful

and it is a social space of response. Her aunt states resistance *starts* with self-care: what she is actually asserting is that, by practicing self-care in the bath, one is able to emotionally and intellectually begin to separate from doctrine (a correct, religious bath that supports male hegemony and tradition) and instead, enjoy the daily practice of caring for one's skin (commencing to create one's "own" bath and its accompanying rituals). One liberates oneself in the daily activity of the bath and "steals" time from the communal household for oneself: one "wigs".

This latter soak-a political one- is more empowering in that it self-soothes (massage), self-validates (by caring for oneself, one practices self-esteem in a physical manner) and more importantly self-defines and frees ( one becomes a "liberated woman" by bathing with self-care rather than thoughtlessly following ritual). From this point one can then turn to ritual; choose to bathe "correctly" and even furthermore, for one's own reasons. I am not suggesting that these bathers cannot freely choose to celebrate their religion via bathing, merely that they have this choice and that they themselves are aware of it and practice both types of baths, often in the same bath- time.

By appearance, therefore, as long as one follows up the "liberated", "reactive" bath with ritual ablutions "les ablutions rituelles (qui) se distinguaient de la toilette normale" (*Rêves* 228), one can conduct *la perruque* insouciantly, yet secretly. In this way we see that these enclosed women practice a form of tactical bathing. One can regard bathing as a quotidian action ripe for exploitation by tactics in that, on a daily basis, bathers are able to determine which type of bath they will practice: one of submission or one of insubordination.

## **Liminal baths and Turner's theories**

Some might state that the simple bath as a liminal zone seems improbable... or at least not as probable in comparison to many other more classically "dramatic" sites or situations that have been examined frequently by utilizing Victor Turner's concept of "social drama." These occasions, such as the Hidalgo Insurrection in Mexico where an act of war was incanted or an African rite of passage in a hut where a boy "becomes" a man (Carlson 21) are solemn, fiery and elegiac. The hygienic rites of the bath, in comparison, seem quite mundane. Thus how could the ordinary *hammam* or *sentō/onsen* be just such a "transitional" arena?

For understanding this, a working definition of liminal zones and liminoid activities is necessary. In *The Ritual Process* anthropologist Victor Turner defines a liminal space as " 'anti-structure,' opposing the 'structure' of normal cultural operations" (Carlson quoting Turner 23). It is where members of a culture converge to "think about how they think in propositions that are not in cultural codes but about them" (Carlson 23). It is, ultimately, an arena which is situated as outside of society where participants go to engage in rituals which will enable them to transition to different levels in society, often on a permanent basis, but not always. It is, above all though, a social space of questioning/challenging one's status in a community (Carlson 23).

There is an obvious intersection, therefore, between Turner's concept of a liminal zone as being "thoughtful", with De Certeau's concepts of a social space, as being able to be temporarily co-opted by the underlings of society who will "think about it" in a different manner than strategy would prescribe. Although Turner's spaces are more often conceptualized as apart and formally separated from society for certain rituals than the common "practiced spaces" of De Certeau, there is no reason to not think of them more broadly.

By engaging in “deep” cultural rituals (both liminal acts and liminoid acts/”play”) in these spaces there is “transition” “by which individuals pass from one role in society to another” (“grow up”/grow in stature socially) and also, *communitas* is formed, which is an equalizing of social space where social stratification is put aside temporarily (Carlson 20). In *Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner explains that liminal acts are those which are ritualized movement which is heavily symbolic (rites of passage), that are present in heavily structured societies (Turner 27-9). Whereas liminoid acts are more playful, individual and subversive and they address tensions that are not encompassed by liminal acts: “One *works* at the liminal, one *plays* at the liminoid” (Turner 55). Thus, as his predecessor Van Gennep, Turner also focused on the more “general” type (Carlson 20) of transition; that brought about by not rites only but also liminoid “social activities” (Carlson 21). If one considers the shared bath as a social activity, one begins to see the intersection between the reactive bathing of Mernissi’s “*odalisques*” (who equalize things on a temporary, and secretive, basis with the Muslim, male, domestic and/or religious hegemony) and Carlson’s “performers” who use transitional activities and liminoid spaces to act out social dramas that ease and address social tensions.

As will be discussed, in the Japanese bath one will see college students achieve a higher status amongst more lowly peers, through bath practice, as they age and begin to expect a certain level of deferment towards them, by younger bathers, in the *sentô*. Furthermore, there, male and female status in greater society is bathed via bathing order in domestic baths. When women bathe in a line of bathers of both genders at home, men are considered as socially more important than women, and thus they bathe first. One will also see office relationships change, via a bath, to establish temporary, and playful, *communitas* amongst workers and supervisors.

Finally as Turner's "social drama" is coming to a close, participants either retreat back to the forms/roles that they played in society (as one will see in Japan), or occasionally, there is a permanent break (21) and a new social role is inhabited fully (as one will see in the bath of Mernissi when her mother forces her husband to retreat permanently from his interference in her bathing practices and not bother her with his bathing suggestions). In his flight that is performed in front of a whole audience of women and children, we will see her grow in social power permanently in the harem due to her reactive, tactical bath "battle" as he will no longer meddle in her bath. Therefore, each "drama" has the same stages:

"breach from a social norm, a 'crisis' phase where factions are formed, followed by a period of redress, as formal and informal mechanisms of crisis resolution are employed...and finally a re-integration..or alternatively, a recognition of the permanence of the schism. (Carlson 21)

It is on this time of redress, when *communitas* is formed, that I mostly focus on in this work.

### **Japanese bathing: self-reflective, group-reflective**

The Japanese shared bath adeptly fits into Turner's definition of a thoughtful liminal space to think of culture and what it means. Clark posits that bathing is a ritual that the Japanese must "think about" (10) it is "imbued with (deep) meaning" (3) that must be mused upon to fully understand it.

For example, when he mentions that he is working on a book that will explain Japan and Japanese culture specifically through an analysis of the bath, one Japanese man whom he met on a train "was so intrigued by both the subject and the opportunity (to talk of its important role in his life)...that he stayed on two hours past his stop" (15) in order to fully express what it meant to him. In another chapter entitled "Bathing in the Modern Era", there is a tabulated analysis of the larger growth of home baths (private) versus public, shared baths over the years (*sentô*s, *onsens*), whose presence is dwindling. Clark notes that this has important "consequences for relationships in the family and in the community" (55).

In regards to this last statement, one Japanese couple worries that, eventually, the *sentō* will disappear and due to the lack of a shared bath in the community, Japan “won’t be Japan anymore” (79). One sees, in worries such as these, how the physical presence of these shared public baths, in the urban landscape, or their absence, triggers either calm or anxiety for the Japanese. The baths construct not only a visual image of what Japan should look like for them, but also, how society “is”; still “Japan” or “not Japan”: i.e. still group oriented (shared baths) or more individualistic (home baths).

The baths function as important communal loci that bond people: They are physical landmarks whose presence in a community speaks of the communal temperature of traditional Japanese society as (correctly) group oriented, hence, shared baths, or (incorrectly) self-oriented and modernized, hence home baths. In analyzing these two baths together (Mernissi’s politicized, self-reflective soak and Japan’s often unquestioning group-oriented one ) one has two interesting tableaux of bathing cultures which one can analyze as a practice of daily insubordination to greater society, versus a practice of submission/validation of it.

### **The Sentō/ Onsen**

Whether in a *sentō* (an indoor, local, public, shared bath) or an *onsen* ( an outdoor hot spring, pricier and less frequented, often in a beautiful vacation spot) one sees a liminoid, separating quality in quotidian bath activity in Japan, which is a deep practice tied to the symbolic, spiritual and social. Not merely practical bathing; it additionally acts as a portal to a mystical, emotional part of man. It is that which

“cleans the outside world’s pollution from the soul.”(Clark 68)

“It is *inochi no goku*” (life’s laundering) (Clark quoting Ueda Toshiro *Hadaka no Tengoku* Naked Heaven 26)

“Water (is seen) as the purification element in the bath (which) cleans, refreshes, relaxes and invigorates not only the Japanese body but also the *kokoro*; the heart or the spirit” (Clark 5)

In this way, bath practice is similar in complexity to *ablutions* in a *hammam*, although not remotely as religious per se. In the bath one pulls away from the physical, everyday world, and is introduced to a more reflective, expressive, ephemeral plane where one emotionally opens. The *onsen*, especially, being more luxurious, is viewed, therefore, as an internal, and an external, cleansing: It is both a physical and a spiritual/emotional renewal and a space where one separates from the world to set oneself apart for a short time to reflect on one's true desires and needs. Whereas the *sentō*, equally important to Japanese quotidian life, functions more as a type of local bar: It is a social space which one frequents, where one visits with one's neighbors and various locals, and bathing acts similarly to a cocktail; easing connections between people.. Social bathing there, is intrinsic for fusing the local community, and one's connection with whomever one invites to it.... This spiritual/social element of the Japanese bath underlines it as similar to the playful *hammam* that Mernissi describes; it is as a type of layered space. In performing a bathing ritual in it, one pulls away from the material world to reconnect with an inner world of emotional *transition* (*Le harem* 107). So as well does the Japanese bath become a doorway through which, in bathing, one accesses one's "soul" "heaven", or "heart" as Clark states.

### ***Communitas* and the Japanese Bath**

Furthermore, the Japanese bath can be seen as a strategic zone where bathers create an ambiguous and tentative *communitas* between bathers of different social strata. The bath as presented in many interviews with Japanese people in Clark's text, and others which he cites in his research, is underlined as a site where placing aside one's clothes also temporarily obscures one's status in society.

“ One informant likened the nakedness at the bath to the symbolic gesture of the sumo wrestler when he spreads his arms, palms up, and then turns palms down signifying the absence of weapons.”(Clark 114)

This is not to say that someone would always be completely confused by one's supervisor, say, donning a towel and thus no longer being the boss in an group-bath at the end of the day with one's co-workers (an occasional practice, which I will henceforth refer to as the "office-bath"), but rather, the act of putting aside clothes is almost as the act of laying down a weapon. The weapon (in this case, a business suit) could be taken up again, but by the act of laying it down and literally being naked, one declares oneself symbolically more open to equalizing with another. The bath, thus, creates kinship and a sense of vulnerability in its sharing of waters which balances participants.

"The warmth not only melts away every barrier but makes bathers relax into brotherhood." (Clark quoting Fukuda 118-119)

"The concept of freedom from normal inequalities of stratification is strong enough that individuals find comfort and companionship in the bath.(Clark 114)

One can consider the bath as a liminal site, therefore, as Turner defines these as spaces where one sees

"in-between situations and conditions ..... characterized by the dislocation of established (social) structures, the reversal of hierarchies."(Horvath, Thomassen, Wydra, 3-4)

In this temporary effacing of outward appearances which reveal social standing, caused by nudity, one sees the creation of *communitas* in the artificial, temporal world of the bath where one's guard, "armament", is put aside. However above all it is a *strategic site* because, in forming *communitas* there, bathers work on, and metamorphose, their relationships with others, not only themselves.

As Turner's liminal zone, the bath is able to create discrete and varied images/experiences of *communitas* for bathers. As Clark reveals, there are a variety of different soaks that one can experience in Japan and each one has a reason behind it. "Trips to hot springs

or special bathhouses with family, friends, classmates, or workmates on holiday excursions are commonplace. An observer can see certain principles of social interaction at work in these situations and examine the reasons for selecting these particular locations.” (Clark 5) One can bathe alone to “unwind and leisurely review the day and plan for tomorrow, to let the mind float and dream, to put problems in perspective” (Clark 67). Yet in introducing other people into the same bath one can change dynamics and get closer to them, or distance oneself, ironically (Clark 115) while bathing together.

For an example of the former, often parents bathe with children to experience “skinship”:  
*sukinshippu*. This is a combining of two “English” words that, for the Japanese, express the notion of skin to skin harmony, a lexical expression for a deeper relationship created due to bathing together. This can occur between colleagues and friends but it is most apparent between parent and child. “Bathing...is thought to develop a bond between parent and child...(even) teenage children sometimes bathe with their parent of the same sex...it improved their relationship” (Clark 73). In bathing this way, the hierarchy of parent to child is softened and they are able to speak more frankly, and interact in a more spontaneous, playful manner, as when the children bathed with their parents as infants and toddlers.

The Japanese can also practice *sukinshippu* in more varied circumstances with more tenuous social bonds. They can bathe with other strangers or also bathe in groups for special occasions to bond socially, such as, for example, to celebrate a community sports victory (it is common to go as a team to a *sentô* after a local soccer game) or a professional one. These group baths can run the gamut; be anything from “pilgrimage” bathing tours (98) (a Christian group going to bathe at some chic hot springs spa in the mountains) “Soaplands” (which provide sexualized baths and services) or ‘Bath Worlds’(81). These are bath centers with movies,

multiple “theme” bathing rooms and even karaoke from the bath; one that I went to in Osaka even had a roller coaster that dizzyingly swept over an outdoor *sentô*, one often goes with friends to these types of baths. They can also extend to bathing with co-workers, this last one being the “Office Bath”. Clark reads each bathing site as inscribed with its own chosen intention behind it that can be discerned with some analysis, and which reveals the bath waters, and chosen site, as crucial for adjusting a critical sense of closeness, a type of radio dialing of a watery realm in order to tune in with others, to explore deeper intimacy or separate.

### **“Play”, *Communitas* and acquisition in the *sentô/onsen* “Office” Bath**

One sees this separation from the real world into a liminal bath world and ludicity, this “radio dialing”, in regard to hierarchy in the “Office Bath” of Japan. By Japanese businessman leaving the office to bathe together as a work-group (an occasional activity), a “slight break” from the real world into a more liminal one is formed: i.e. there is a type of “breach”. By this I mean that the office bath environment will seem similar to that of the office (as will be discussed, it will mimic office seating patterns and hierarchy), but, due to it being a bath, there will be a crossing-over between hierarchies (“play”) which will bring about instances of *communitas*. As Clark notes, and as has already been mentioned, there is a “strong degree of liminality about sharing the same bath that unifies participants” (114); bathing in a “Japanese” manner in the *sentô/onsen* creates *communitas*.

“ ‘Above all, it is unquestionable that people stripped of every conceivable stamp of class distinction in the form of clothes and sharing the bath with one another find it hard to retain either superiority or inferiority complexes. In the bath, of all the places in the country, human pretensions evaporate, as it were, into the wealth of steam.’ ” (Clark quoting Fukuda 1934 118-19)

In this separation from the “cultural norm” of rigid Japanese office politics and hierarchy, one sees the exceptional function that bathing plays in maintaining discrete levels of social strata in Japanese life. The Office Bath becomes where one can “play” with social/work roles and

one's relationship to one's "real" role and in doing so "question" it to "let off steam" but ultimately the goal is reintegration. In the mist the relationship between administrator and worker becomes fraternal and results in a temporary shifting of social strata in the bath.

"These men insisted that the social positions were closer, that the communication was easier, that everyone was relatively equal, and the group was one entity" (Clark 114)

Similar but different to having a drink with the boss, this "Office Bath" that-is-not-the-office-yet-is- (for example it mimics office seating arrangements, is peopled with workers, yet it is a bath) opens up closer intimacy and an unspoken sense of connection. Yet it is due to just this liminal quality, the bath's "betwixt and between-ness", its ability to be a stage where one can either recreate the exterior world or create another temporary reality, that it also begins to diverge into a "playful" world where bathers can choose both to reify hierarchy (reintegration) or underline equality (*communitas*). It is, again, strategic in De Certeau's sense.

For strategy, one sees that the bath's physical layout and how it is occupied and utilized, underscores the power of strict hierarchy. When bathing in business groups, for example, participants reify office strata by recreating office seating patterns.

"A large rock at the end of the bath (was) in a commanding position. It was too high for comfortable, up-to-the-neck bathing, a serious deficiency, but the spot was always occupied by the most senior man in the organization."(Clark 113)

Yet, tacticians can usurp this moment to exploit possibilities as well. Participants also simultaneously "play" with hegemony; subordinate bathers question cultural norms by utilizing linguistic changes in register that address their superiors in a more equal manner. Although the most senior executive sits on a slightly higher seat (or rock, if one is in an outside *onsen*) for "often the honorary place in a communal bath is slightly higher than those of subordinates" (Clark 113) simultaneously there is a slight equalization between all different levels of workers

linguistically “Subordinates may address superiors in a more familiar tone while bathing than at the workplace.” (Clark 113)

Here we see a blurring of worldly outside social boundaries via this interior, liminal space. In the Office Bath true social strata is partially submerged via the complex rites of bathing “politely”. Using a familiar tone/register of grammar that underlings might comfortably address superiors with, adds to a sense of partial *communitas*. Normally rigid social registers are built into polite language in Japan, similar to the “vous” and “tu” form of French but even more complex and varied. The bath, thus, becomes a liminal zone where social drama and temporary *communitas* eases tensions perhaps that have accumulated within the office, due to rigid work hierarchy.

Yet, amusingly, the “Office Bath” still demarcates the subordinate status of women in the office. This is not unusual as Japan is one of the few First World countries where it is legal to pay women less than a man’s wage for the same position, and where women often quit work once they are married. Whilst participating in the occasion, the females’ social level in Clark’s bath remains static. At an *onsen* office party that he observed for example

“Two female secretaries-dressed and not bathing-were busy bringing food and drink to the men in the outdoor bath. Later, when the females left for their room, the junior males jumped and went for the sake when the boss said that his throat felt dry.”(113)

Although the shared bath does become a liminal zone for women as well in Japan when it is shared between other women (as Clark notes in a charming anecdote where a Japanese woman and a foreign woman become “bathing buddies” and in doing so “what had started out as a lonely experience for the non-Japanese woman led to a close friendship”(Clark 112) )in this Office Bath their roles stay the same; secretary to waitress is not Turner’s shape-shifting “transition”.

Yet additionally, when the women leave, more junior males take on the secretary/waitress role. The *onsen* performance of bathing underlines the superior's role, but the subordinates move back and forth between "lesser" status ("women") or greater/closer (speaking in a familiar register). In the playing that occurs in the bath, one sees how, still, this bath is scripted; *sukkenshippu* and the use of a more familiar register are part and parcel of correct bath usage in Japan. As opposed to Mernissi's *hammam* where women choose their own unique reactions in the bath-space to create *communitas* (equality with the men/more dominant females/the *Uma* i.e; Muslim world-wide family) the Japanese form of equalization is already built into the bathing ritual. Thus, one could consider the bath as more correctly bathing hegemony (strategy) even while it seems to be questioning it.

This underlying conciliatory bath language, the "performance art", of bathing politics in Japan obviously contrasts with that of the Moroccan *hammam* which we will look at momentarily. In the Fez *harem*, the bath will become a contested zone between men and women, where females tactically resist Islamic norms via their own creative ideas, whereas in the *onsen/sentô*, one could consider Japanese bathing to be more "shallow" than a deep, resistive bath such as Mernissi describes. In the *onsen/sentô* the variety of bath-moves, operate within a narrow range of readable behaviors in the pool which everyone who is Japanese is familiar with. In contrast, in Mernissi's tactical *hammam*, women's bathing is highly individualistic; each woman creates her own unique, tactical bath.

As has already been established, the *onsen/sentô* and *hammam* are both public spaces where norms, how to bathe correctly, reflect, and more importantly, generally support/reify cultural hegemony. Although it is true that one can create *communitas* there, simultaneously this is a choice; the bath can also be "practiced" in such a way that it supports and underlines social

stratification. In Clark's description the *onsen/sentô* is a ritual where hierarchy is established and furthermore and this is important, by practice reinforced.

### **Stratification**

For an example of social stratification being practiced historically via bathing, records that reach back as far as the warrior class of the Meiji Restoration show that "Documents....indicate that prominent warrior families followed a bathing order" (Clark 68) that was similar to the Office Bath, in that it bathed hierarchy. Those who were most powerful, socially, bathed first. One sees bathing as something that was patriarchal in form then, thousands of years ago, and continues to the present day. In most traditional families one could probably still see this, however, perhaps with the long work hours of salary men, this might not always be the practice. Sexism is being practiced daily in the home bath, as well as hierarchy based on age, in terms of women's bathing as last. One could consider this a subtle strategic reminder of their "lower" status in the home, as Clark notes himself

"Countless times I was informed that the proper order (for bathing) in traditional Japan was for the (male) household head to enter the bath first, followed by other male members of the household in order of descending age. After the males had bathed, the females bathed in order. As the socially lowest member of the household bathed last, a new bride who married into her husband's household typically had to bathe last." (68)

Even sumo wrestlers and college seniors in modern times are able to pull-rank in this liminal world which spills into the larger "real" one. Bath performance, as in the "Office Bath" echoes social strata outside the pool.

"The highest ranking sumo wrestlers bathe first, underlings prepare the bath...A student living in a college dormitory with its own bath told me that the senior students had the juniors scrub backs." (Clark 72)

By bathing in the normal manner, thus, one sees how "practicing" bathing in Japan is something even further than a temporary ludic act. When repeated daily, throughout *centuries*, one sees a Japanese bath that, in thousands of *sentôs* and *onsens*, bathes quotidian sexism and

hierarchy: hegemony. It is important to note, though, that this hierarchy is not merely bath-specific: Japanese culture is quite formal in many daily behaviors such as food service, tea service etc. The elder, the more influential...much daily social interaction privileges them in notable, yet discreet manners. Additionally Clark's research is mostly centered on sites of male bathing, due to his gender. Aside from a few anecdotes, most of his chapters focus on male bath-practice in the bath.

Bath practice becomes De Certeau's everyday act which can be "an operation of marking out boundaries-*bournage*."(De Certeau 123). However this term-*bournage*- is not used here to express the boundaries created by worded accounts of physical land tracts as in De Certeau's text. Rather, it is being borrowed for a slightly different meaning. The actions are *bournage*, in that this bath practice is a means to physically inscribe the interior bath, to "write" its boundaries with the practice of hierarchal bathing. This maps it with a cartography of bathing so that there are physical distances and orders that read as a three dimensional diagram. One sits this close to this one, and this far from this one, and prior to one's bath this one has already bathed... but beneath me, then there will be that last one. It creates not a verbal, but a physical, acted out narrative of correct social order.

By forcing bath order in this fashion, of course- the highest to the lowest, the closest to the farthest - the intent is to contain larger societal "waters" of the exterior world; to bathe hierarchy not just from the outside in, but from the inside out. Bathing literally (re)creates a bath world on a physical level that almost maps hierarchy in a manner that, prior, in the outside, real world is done more with clothing and with linguistics (grammar/register) and actual societal life roles. Bath practice creates a subtle, or not- so-subtle, system of submission and coercion on such a daily basis that the properly stratified bath becomes a normal looking bath. Rather than

being re-appropriated by a tactical bather, in Japan, the bath is practiced into its appropriate social space: one of stratification and submission, ultimately. By doing so, the bath also becomes a narrative activity, an acted out performance of bathing hierarchy which is transitional in the most mundane manner; the lower *sumo* will eventually become the one who is scrubbed by still lower *sumos*, the freshman will become a scrubbed senior.

### **Separation from greater society and Strategy via the bath**

Having outlined how De Certeau's and Turner's theories could be used to analyze an alternative function of a bath, and how it could become a space of societal questioning and also reintegration, I would like now to introduce the pool of Mernissi's "odalisques". It functions as a terrain of political intrigue: specifically, it is a zone of self-expression for emancipated female bathers, and a space for oppression by religious and patriarchal forces. Games and tactics deployed in the *hammam* by the women, ultimately, will permanently affect the balance of power in the harem-household within which the bath is contained. The space, like Clark's Japanese bath, is a self-reflective one, through which bathers can commence liberating themselves from the oppression of the *Uma* by creating a personal, unique, liminal space which allows them to challenge strategy. This transitional zone of the bath allows them to temporarily, and then permanently, subvert hegemonic structures (patriarchal Muslim culture) and thus, as the Japanese bath, create *communitas* with it.

### **Battle of the Moroccan *bain***

Although Mernissi does not delineate this concept of a reactionary bath in her texts (instead she focuses on how her image of "reality" in the bath of the east, again, counters a western, Orientalist mindset) in reading her descriptions I could not help but be struck by the continual image of ludicity in her anecdotes of harem life and especially in those stories that

relate to the *hammam* and bathing in general. Women are repeatedly shown as social warriors who utilize the bath, and the act of bathing, as a platform, and means, by which they resist strategy's control over their lives in a ludic manner which is also tactical.

### **Outdoor bathing versus Indoor bathing and “rules” of Maghreban social spaces**

I will begin with one tale about outdoor bathing when the women (tacticians) go to a harem- farm ( the farm of a relative which has no walls, where they enjoy the countryside, but are still considered to be sequestered) and bathe in a river and finish with several telling anecdotes of indoor bathing in the *hammam*. In perusing the memoirs, there are many instances of bathing which are presented. The bulk of them focus on the home (actually neighborhood) *hammam*, except this one outdoor section. More specifically, upon analysis, they all reveal the bathing space as a zone of tactical usage, whether outdoors or indoors.

### **Outdoor bathing**

At the farm, the feminist bathers who have gone to the country for the hot summer use outdoor bathing as a means to tactically inject some fun into their boring, sequestered lives. They argue for the task of utilizing a stream in which to wash dishes, to both enjoy themselves and also, to upend the harem household, when they encounter the rage of the influential “First Wife”, Lalla Thor, who is upset at their idea (*Rêves “Vaisselle Aquatique”* 65).

In doing so, they decide to start swimming while cleaning them, something unheard of in 1940's Morocco by women. Bathing in the water becomes a means by which they explore their sporty sides and some become almost as heroines for their feminist collective.

« Mabrouska pouvait non seulement nager comme un poisson et rester très longtemps sous l'eau, mais elle avait sauvé de la noyade bon nombre d'épouses qui, sans elle, auraient été emportées par les flots...ou le fleuve....Son rôle pendant les expéditions de vaisselle consistait à rattraper les pots...qui échappaient aux autres. Elle devait lutter contre le courant et les rapporter sur la rive. Chaque fois qu'elle émergeait, un pot ou une casserole sur la tête, les femmes applaudissaient. » (*Rêves* 68-9)

Here one sees how the practical, daily act of bathing moves from a correct space, the religious *hammam*, to an incorrect one: the open air. Bathing for chores to support the harem household and by dint, Muslim, patriarchal hegemony (which is still interjecting fun into a rote task) becomes instead, a bathing for self and in doing so, they not only express their individualism but they discover new roles for themselves: “aquatic heroine” as opposed to merely dish-trapper and washer.

By slyly positioning their longing for a swim and some recreation to their harem male masters as work that women must, of course, do, (dishes) they also tactically use an opportunity for daily duties to create an opportune moment to liberate themselves from the constraints of the religious *Uma* via bathing while doing them. They even going so far as to unveil as they swim, due to this being “practical”: “elles ont également la tête nue, car elles ne peuvent lutter contre la courant”(Rêves 68). Bathing tactically while working (i.e. supposedly doing chores) becomes a means by which they rebel against religious clothing constraints. They conduct *la perruque*.

According to Mernissi, the exterior Muslim world- “any space”- come with an “invisible” series of rules “*qu’ida*” which inscribe a space (Rêves 61). These are such as that a *harem* belongs to a man- that includes the women *in* it- and no other male is able to enter the zone without permission of the male owner. If they are allowed to enter they must obey the Master’s rules. A harem, according to Mernissi is about public versus

“private space and the rules regulating it. In addition... it did not need walls. Once you knew what was forbidden you carried the harem within. You had it in your head ‘inscribed under your forehead and under your skin’ ” (Mernissi *Dreams of Trespass* 60).

Mernissi states that, upon hearing this, she feels “tattooed in the mind” (*Dreams of Trespass* 60). The *hammam*, of course, is also part of this *harem*. This specific river, moreover, is part of what she coins an “outdoor harem” which Mernissi enjoys, which is her uncle’s, because it has no physical walls...yet the women still don’t leave on their own and from the above quote we

understand why.

In comprehending how intrinsically linked social space is, in the author's culture, with women's rights of just basic movement (men can move freely, women must ask for permission to move into the same zones, or are completely forbidden from using them, and they must often be accompanied by a male, even if it is a small male child, they are "property" in private space) one can see how outdoor, veil-less bathing by females becomes revolutionary. They are, in actuality, metaphorically building/creating accessible social space; stealing (*la perruque*) from the countryside, an outdoor bath that they control, "take" from the farm-harem which is a domestic sphere of the *Uma*.

By carving a space out of nature (co-opting a river and turning it into a "dishwasher" to both wash dishes, and then, while washing, to transform it into a pool, to swim uncovered and trap the pots, laughing) bathing moves from a male-controlled zone (the *harem hammam*) with bathing as an ablution, to a more neutral one where bathing becomes a tactical act of assertion and re-creation of social space. The male "owned" harem-stream, an everyday spot, becomes practiced into a pool of freedom by the women via reactionary bathing.

The women morph into new forms in the river; they are in fact unrecognizable; no headdresses, one is like a "fish". She is certainly a super-hero for these women as they applaud her. Here literally women create a new bath and by imagining a new space to bathe in, they push the boundaries of proper bathing from Islamic "correct" bathing to tactical; they swim in the outdoors with the head uncovered and there are no ablutions. In short they recreate a bath that again, thumbs its nose at patriarchal and religious convention as to what a bath traditionally does (officiates religion) and what it is (domestic, patriarchal social space).

As this zone is not man-made, there are technically no “rules” written on it. Hence one will see how the women can more easily convince the harem Elder, to support their right to their new bathing space, over the First Wife’s objection. The women tactically argue against the nefarious Lalla Thor, the prohibitive, jealous woman who is able to avoid sharing their work, due to her superior marital status, when she proclaims that they will bring dishonor down on the harem due to their outdoor bathing and that, furthermore, what the women propose (being outdoors in a group, swimming) is against religious ideals.

« Lalla Thor fut scandalisée, disant que l’idée était totalement contraire à la tradition musulmane.... Yasmina répliqua que Lalla Thor serait beaucoup plus utile aux musulmans si elle cessait de lire ses vieux bouquins et mettait la main à la pâte comme tout le monde » (*Rêves* 66)

The women refuse to be cowed. They go to the eldest male of the family and argue their position to continue to be allowed to swim, using “Koranic logic”. Yasmina, one aunt, states that open-air bathing could be seen as a type of test: If Allah is against it, surely the women will know one day, when they are judged harshly in heaven.

« apres tout, la rivière était une création d’Allah, une manifestation de son pouvoir et, de toute façon, si nager était un péché, elles étaient prêtes à en répondre devant lui un jour... Grand-père, impressionné par leur logique, leva la séance en disant qu’il était heureux que, dans la religion islamique, la responsabilité fut une affaire individuelle. » (*Rêves* 67)

Grandfather agrees, because there is no *sharia* to consult for this situation, as this is not a man-made social space.

Here, again, one sees how the women use the act of tactical bathing, here swimming, to liberate themselves from the daily religious and patriarchal constraints of their lives while seemingly using it to celebrate and honor their religion and Allah by utilizing it to support the household: i.e. do chores. By tactically aligning the idea of swimming in their argument, with accomplishing “women’s work” and “enjoying” “Allah’s creation” for the *Uma*, they use bathing as a means to finish chores and thus they assuage the *Uma*, yet at the same time they utilize *la*

*perruque* via bathing. They “steal” the water from the river which is meant for the domestic chores to create an open air bath-space which is physically very different from the *hammam* which is enclosed in a quadrilateral *harem*.

In the open air, we see the bath morph from a planned space of walls and rituals- each room has its function, especially that last which is for the rituals for Allah -to one of no borders: there are limits to streams and rivers but the water itself is the essence of liminal. There is no space of ritual ablutions (literally no space) and thus this step of proper bathing is jettisoned. In addition to negating bathing ritual, they cast off most Islamic norms as well. In the river bath, the bathers go about with a nude head and enjoy the liberating feeling of exercise and enjoyment of an un-sequestered moment. With the winning of their argument, they also temporarily equalize themselves with Lalla Thor, by getting their own way; lesser wives thus establish *communitas* with the First Wife by their act of tactical bathing and by their imaginative use of the river to create an alternative bathing room which is unaffected by any of the norms (*qui'da*) that a regular *hammam* would be.

### **Indoor bathing**

The bathing that is conducted indoors by contrast, is framed by the bath-rooms of the *hammam*. These are already inscribed with rules as they are the formal social space overseen by *sharia*.

One sees this in the form of the bath itself, which is parceled into rooms (*qui'da* is even related to building foundations); a series of three, the final space for prayer. In a traditional *hammam* each section has its purpose. The bath is practical, physically speaking, yet it is also emotionally, spiritually, culturally and moreover, religiously important to bathe, as a pious “good” Muslim woman.

The first room is actually at the home, if one is not wealthy enough to have a whole *hammam* in the home. Thus this first room is the courtyard where the women prepare themselves and where the men should not be, for modesty's sake, while they organize for the ritual. This is however, the courtyard which Mernissi's father enters, to give his input on his wife's bath. The second room is actually two of three steamy rooms where you steam in the first and go into a "cleaning frenzy", scrubbing the skin (*Rêves* 237) in the second; the third is the least favorite place for the children. This is where you get "tortured" as this is the extreme cleanse room where you also cleanse spiritually by conducting post-*hammam* ablutions which prepare you as pure to pray after. Thus one sees how this physical space is written with rules. Each room has its purpose and the third is highly religious. One would not dream of "purifying" in the second, nor *not* purifying in the third, as one is watched. I will return to this last point, towards the end of this chapter.

### **Tactical Indoor Bathing**

Besides the above anecdote where the "odalisques" use bathing to leap the boundaries of the restrictive indoor harem into the outside world, tactical acts of bathing inside the harem with specific bath products, and a bath performance "battle", demonstrate playfully that they will not submit control of all social space to strategy: i.e. male influence or age-related, or marriage related, Islamic hierarchy: *sharia* and *qu'ida*.

For example Mernissi's mother is told by her fundamentalist mother-in-law, who dislikes her, that if she uses *henna* her husband might divorce her. "Il pourrait bien aller au lit de sa seconde épouse puisque vous le chassez du votre avec votre henné puant" (*Rêves* 224). As one sees here, bathing implements are used by a more dominant woman in the harem (the mother-in-law) as a means to apply pressure to the daughter-in-law to not only kowtow to her wishes but

also Islamic *sharia*: Her husband is the boss and *qu'ida* is expected to be obeyed, and this means that whatever he desires her to do, she should be happy to do it.

The fact that the mother-in-law considers henna application to be deviant enough to merit her son taking a second wife, shows us the seriousness of her pettiness, in involving herself in her daughter-in-law's toilet. However, Mernissi's mother has no intention of abnegating her rights and she also continues to employ the *henna* as a form of metaphoric, tactical "reply" to both her mother-in-law and her husband. She states that it makes her hair shinier and when her bath day arrives and she still sports it, he is the one who leaves; he is described as "fleeing" the harem for the day (*Rêves* 222).

This flight then becomes a weekly theatrical ritual which is viewed by the children and the women of the household. It is specifically a play battle and furthermore one with an audience that is highly impressionable. With ludicity, the participants negotiate the stress in the harem household between Mernissi's mother and father, with a battle performance where they theatrically practice alternative social roles on bath day; the woman the conqueror and the man the conquest. She even creates a type of armament with the forbidden product which he despises.

She chases him in a *henna* "helmet" and an unattractive vegetable mask on her face of chickpeas and melon (*Rêves* 221) in front of the children on the terrace ( where he is not supposed to be at that time). This is a precursor to his final leaving for the day to avoid seeing her in her monstrous *henna*.

"Donc, le jeudi, mon père s'arrangeait pour quitter la maison, la plus tôt possible. Si par hasard il avait besoin d'y revenir, il fuyait ostensiblement la présence de ma mère. C'était un jeu très apprécié dans la cour (les occasions où les hommes manifestaient de la terreur devant les femmes étaient effectivement rarissimes.) Ma mère se mettait à poursuivre mon père entre les piliers, et tout le monde hurlait de rire, jusqu'à ce que Lalla Mani, avec son imposante coiffe apparaisse sur le seuil de son appartement" (*Rêves* 222)

As they engage in a ludic, performance of "war" in front of the harem females, as well as both

the very young boys and girls, all watch and laugh, enjoying this role-reversal. The hated mother-in-law's presence at the finale stops the game and is also, of course, necessary for it to be "successful": Mernissi's mother's "*jeu politique*" is aimed at her, as well, even more so than her husband. Via masking theatrically for the bath, with bath products -bathing tactically- she publically demonstrates for the entire harem how she refuses to abnegate the "puant" *henna* despite her mother-in-law's advice.

### **Guerilla Theater**

The tactical "play" battle enables the bather to challenge strategy (her husband, her mother-in-law, religious hegemony that regards a proper wife as one who is submissive) yet in a ludic manner by which she can deny responsibility, on the surface, for her aggressiveness; her defiance is merely a "game." Here one sees how tactical resistance via masking with forbidden bath products shows, again, a type of cunning; one pushes the boundaries of propriety, but only so much.

Yet concomitantly, this "war dance", like the outdoor bathing in the river, transforms correct Muslim social space temporarily. It becomes not the space that is owned by men and designed by them, but that which is controlled and re-designed by women. Her theatrical, resistive preparation for the *hammam* on the public terrace with her forbidden henna and "uglifying" re-forms it into an alternative zone. The terrace (male domain, the harem) becomes a female domain (theater). Additionally the masking becomes an instructive social spectacle, especially for both genders of children who are able to see a rare type of guerrilla theater; a woman challenging a man. Not only she, but the bulk of the female bathers mask for the children when they bathe, they are

"vraiment repoussantes, couvertes de tous ces masques aux fruits, aux légumes et aux œufs, et vêtues de leurs plus vieux qamis." (*Rêves* 214)

Thus we see that the bathers playfully indoctrinate the young with their bathing resistance by showing them ludic, dramatic examples of female defiance. The mask becomes not only practical (a means to clean) but theatrical (a means to create a new vision of what a woman could be: scary, not submissive, intentionally ugly). This is especially important for not only the boys, but the girls to see. They must have feminist standards by which to follow.

This costuming in old *qamis* and masking frees the women from their normal, expected roles as subservient domestic help. It allows them the privilege of *riposte*. Women are supposed to be silent and obedient, not ugly, amusing and alarming. The women, however, enjoy making themselves as ugly as possible and they even have contests to assert this with an uglifying mirror that proves who won. In doing so, they become “devils” symbolically with “satanic dots” for eyes (*Rêves* 214). In showing these frightening visages of women to the young girls and boys, they demonstrate in a tactical manner that women are not merely subservient, but potentially monstrous, yet again “as a joke”.

« Il était apparemment essentiel de s'enlaidir le plus possible quand on se préparait pour le hammam, sous le prétexte que plus une femme est laide avant d'entrer dans le bain, plus elle a de chances d'être belle en sortant. Effectivement, celles qui réussissaient à avoir l'apparence la plus affreuse se voyaient applaudir et remettre le 'miroir d'horreur' du hammam, un glace bizarre dont le tain était tout usé et qui avait le pouvoir inquiétant de déformer les traits, en réduisant les yeux à de minuscules points sataniques. » (*Rêves* 214)

When Mernissi's mother goes one step further and creates her costumed war dance, she forms a practiced space from the terrace (where one prepares for the bath) via her masking and battle. It becomes a social zone transformed by action. In this case the pursuit itself recreates the space from one that is a domestic circle to that which is a stage. By hunting her husband as a “monster” between the pillars dressed in her “uglifying” bath-mask, the central living zone of the

harem and the bath is changed from that which is orderly, domestic and submissive (the correct way to use the social space) to a ludic stage/maze (incorrect).

The man has invaded the female arena (as we know that the terrace and the bath are considered as female zones there, especially before a bath). The audience knows well how Mernissi's mother's husband and mother-in-law feel about her mother's *henna*, and yet, in choosing to play war on this self-styled stage, both Mernissi's mother and her father repudiate her mother-in-law's pronouncements: He will not leave her for a second wife.

Through this dance, he shows his love publically. He theatrically submits to her and hence, shows his retreat in front of the whole household. In this ludic battle, *communitas* is established between husband and wife; he jokingly accedes to her, but also, in actuality.

Mernissi's mother, later, also retaliates against her mother-in-law tactically by the same means; using bath facial masques as a type of metaphoric weaponry. She symbolically steals her mother-in-law's beauty by having her child spy on her, to abscond with her private recipe for a facial masque which is presented as almost a witch's spell. After preparing the complicated *mélange* one must "rester assise sous un parasol, sur une terrasse avec une belle vue" (*Rêves* 220) for it to truly work. Withholding beauty product secrets has become a way that Mernissi's mother's mother-in-law attempts to punish her and others in the harem who do not recognize her authority. Everyone knows that this mask specifically makes her skin "glow" but no one is allowed to know the ingredients until Mernissi is sent as a "spy" and her Mother begins to use the mask as well.

"Il faut m'attribuer le mérite d'avoir découvert le masque aux dates, car si je n'avais pas espionné... ma mère n'aurait jamais eu vent de ce secret." (*Rêves* 220)

She then not only uses it, but its secret becomes distributed to all the harem women, in a truly passive-aggressive coup. Mernissi's mother's tactical theft of the bath product-mask recipe, and

her distribution of it to the women, enables her to again, establish a type of *communitas* between the women and the overbearing mother-in-law who is the head of the household. In “stealing” her mother-in-law’s beauty secrets, while refusing to eliminate her hated henna and thus not prostrating to her, to this end, Mernessi’s mother eludes her mother-in-law’s advances to control her life and her marriage via tactically bathing in the weekly *hammam*. The ludic fighting/theft scenarios staged by Mernessi’s mother in the bath are used to challenge the gender and age-differentiated social power system of the *Uma*.

### ***Propre magie***

This tactical maneuvering comes to a finale when Mernessi’s father continues his quest to enter/influence the female-controlled *hammam*. Ultimately he offers his wife a plethora of extremely expensive French bath products, though he knows that she loves her traditionally made ones, whose odor he detests.

“Mon père avait essayé de dissuader ma mère de utiliser les traitements de beauté traditionnels en lui faisant essayer les produits de beauté français, qui demandaient beaucoup moins de temps de préparation et donnaient des résultats immédiats.” (*Rêves* 223)

When she refuses to use most of them (throwing them away) and she declares that she will continue to use her own home-made products, she states specifically that this is a feminist act. In trying to pilfer her ability to control her appearance, she declares, her husband is now trying to rob her, of her only realm of power where she can express agency “Je crée ma propre magie et je n’abandonnerai jamais mon henné” (*Rêves* 223). In disallowing the input over her female bath-care “weapons”- her hair color, her *soins*, her “*magie*”- Mernessi’s mother uses beauty products to resist both Eastern and Western patriarchy. She re-paints her “tableau” (her skin/hair) as a woman who is independent (she does not submit to her husband nor her mother-in-law) and who will not also be colonized.

In regards to this latter statement it is important to note that she is Moroccan; by refusing the French products and making her own, she tactically resists French hegemony as well in a ludic, performative, tactical manner via bathing. With her boycott of foreign goods this simple, illiterate, enclosed odalisque becomes a sophisticated “consumer/tactician...artful in manipulating events to turn them into ‘opportunities’ for (her) own benefit” (Evans partially quoting de Certeau 23). In utilizing the bath as a political stage to resist the imams and her husband and her Mother-in-law and the French colonizers (all strategy) by a simple, almost too simple, preparation and lancing of skin-care, she makes a *jeu politique* of her skin in the manner that her sister, Mernissi’s Aunt, advises her.

### **Skin as a canvas**

What is shown as a specific human surface, thus, in Mernissi’s bath, bare skin, becomes as a political “canvas”; it is transformed by playful resistive bathing to a tableau on which an “odalisque” equalizes her relationship with her husband and mother-in-law, the West and religious hegemony, by slathering on henna and her filched mask. Although Mernissi’s mother does return to the harem after, hence there is “reintegration”, she has not only temporarily toyed with a new role (warrior), but she slowly, carefully and successfully adjusts her relationship with her husband via ludic play in the bath to maintain a feeling of independence and self-assertion.

By using bath products almost as a paint upon which they can metamorphose their skin to look like “gargoyles” and also using the time of the bath to separate from larger society, the act of bathing intentionally (tactically) mirrors the rites conducted in Turner’s liminal zones where masking and separation from society creates time for transitional rites and emotional transition itself.

In her aunt's advising the young Mernissi to take care of her skin and from there "commence" her liberation, naked flesh becomes an artistic scrim for these enclosed women. To put this in another manner, skin functions effectively very much like the blank canvas for the French, Orientalist painters. As the taut fabric, it too becomes the space where one *starts* to portray what a woman is, one takes the first brush stroke (or scrub) and with that one begins to paint/create a picture/portrayal of a woman's flesh and what she is; in the bathers' realm this painting is with a forbidden mask of henna or some other concoction that is not part of a religious, submissive tradition. Thus metaphorically the female skin too, is a *tableau* on which an "odalisque" can inscribe their self-worth, but in a secretive, tactical manner, regardless of a Muslim *Uma* which hopes to use the bath as a means to inscribe on female flesh their pronouncements of what bath ritual "should" be; that of self-abnegation to Allah. This latter is also "inscribed" on the flesh by the complex bathing rites that women must adhere to which will be described in detail further on (*Rêves* 228).

### **Practicing piety and patriarchy in *Le harem***

Finally, although we have already viewed the resistive bath of Mernissi's *harem* childhood, one can see the full range of behaviors that can practice a bath that creates submission as well in her memoirs. The Fez *harem hammam* is where grown men cannot enter to oversee the women (as opposed to the public world where they are able to, in 1940, almost panoptically observe them in a quadrilateral *harem*) and one that women can use incorrectly (appropriate) by using it as a bath-space but also a space to perform playful insurgency. However this may be, it is additionally where the design and normal usage, i.e. the daily practice of correct bathing, create an environment where women can police each other and support the daily practice of patriarchal submission if they so desire. If someone is using *henna* in the bath, for example, and

her husband does not want her to, this will be told and noted, such as when Mernissi's mother's mother-in-law monitors her daughter-in-law's bathing (*Rêves* 224).

We also see this practiced bath of submission in the multiplicity of images that she offers of bathing as a norm that adheres to social customs based on culture and also religion. In performing these acts aligned with a proper bath, one is able to practice, again, hegemonic reification on a weekly basis, which stands as a counterpoint to whatever resistive performance is offered tactically.

After a properly-performed *hammam*, one must stop to kiss one's mother-in-law's hand, for example, as hand kissing one's superior after the bath was a traditional ritual (*Rêves* 224). Mernissi's mother does this, despite their awkward relationship. Similar to the *onsen/sentô*, the correct *hammam* is also precise and full of ornate rites to take one's place in the proper order of *sharia*. The women conduct complex

“ablutions rituelles... pour se purifier les grandes personnes devaient utiliser l'eau la plus pure possible.... Les ablutions rituelles se distinguaient de la toilette normale par la concentration silencieuse qui les accompagnait, et l'ordre strict... les mains, la bouche, le nez, le visage, les bras, la tête, les oreilles et enfin les pieds. Il était interdit de courir devant une femme en train de effectuer ses ablutions, car alors elle était force de les recommencer.” (*Rêves* 228)

This bath ritual, which is so methodical that one must recommence it if one is interrupted, reveals the bath as again a practiced space of hegemonic daily reification where proper bath order, in the form of body washing, bathes not the body but the skin as a tableau on which are inscribed the Muslim *Uma's* expectations for a woman's purity and its idea of an order for things. Despite Mernissi's insistence that certain Western baths have little sensuality, in comparison to her *hammam*- they are “aussi propre qu'un bloc opératoire”- (*Le harem*106) one views this bath as also complex and rigid. The children are even aware of the correct way to use this physical space which seems to morph depending on which scene is being played for them on its stage: One does not run in front of ritual-performing-women as this *hammam* is serious, yet

one does laugh and clap as mother chases father in the courtyard before the other *hammam*, yet one is still when ritual is performed because people are watching. The *hammam* thus is practiced in many ways in this text into either a space of resistance or submission.

This specific 1940's Fez *hammam* in these anecdotes, thus, could be Foucault's space where "gridding" occurs; the bath creates a "visible space in such a way that it makes its occupants available for observation and 'information' "(de Certeau discussing Foucault, 46-7). It is a pool where women are watched by other women from their household and where bathing performance in front of others is created to both instruct young children in proper bath etiquette, and more importantly, to show, ostensibly, that one is pious and compliant to *sharia* and *harem* life, as well as one's mother-in-law. Appropriating the bath for one's own tactical use is not something that is merely instructed, instead it is also observed by the children. What is additionally shown and verbalized daily is a correct use of the space.

### **Creating "unwritten" spaces**

If indeed existing "spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities...(which tactics) can make exist as well as emerge" (de Certeau 99) here tacticians (women bathers) of this *harem* appropriate, and interject themselves, into social space and avoid obeying *qu'ida* by imaginatively creating alternative arenas to bathe out of strategy's terrain. They use tactics to reconfigure formerly formed social space, which has often been overwritten by *sharia*. Furthermore there is no immutable spatial order to this new space, by this I mean no structure to this which cannot be morphed into something else, again by tactics, to continue to evade strategy's reach. This immutability is due to two aspects of this social space: 1) either it has never existed in this specific vein for *sharia* to encompass-as a zone for "*vaisselle aquatique*" from a *harem*-owned river for example – or if it has, it is 2) being "re-written" and emerging, as

de Certeau coins this, from a former space, a guerilla theatre stage made out of a *harem*-courtyard, for example. *Sharia* cannot account for, or prevent, tactics from being deployed to evade or subvert it. The multiplicity and pervasiveness of *sharia* laws, being so vague and interpretable, lend themselves to being tactically challenged.

In researching social spaces, I was struck by this quote by Henri Lefebvre which encapsulated for me the separation, and consummation, of spaces historically in many cultures, by the religious hegemonic machine (Strategy) especially as it pertains to Islam and the *hammam* and *harem*. “Dominated space and appropriated space...there was once such a thing as an appropriation without domination” (166). Is it possible, I thought, for these women to create a bath which is fully theirs (appropriated) from that which previously existed? No, not as the *hammam* has already been underwritten with rules and dominated by a culture that does not allow women full measure of their collective spaces, those which, moreover, are saturated with religious signs and expectations. Female bathers can merely tactically borrow the bath.

### **Rules: the bath as a symbolic space**

Returning to *qu'ida* now, Mernissi's “odalisques” understand rules to the point that they have internalized them into a “harem within” (*Dreams* 56). This, as Mernissi states, is almost written on their brains as *tatouage*. I have already outlined how *qu'ida* influences both gender's uses of social spheres that are shared, and more importantly, how it is crucial to the preserving of patriarchal culture and upholding of *sharia*. They have an understanding of an almost De Certeauian universe, where strategy's rules inscribe a space (*Rêves* 61) and moreover are distinctly against women.

“Une terrasse, ou un pièce, parfois même une rue. Partout où il y a des êtres humaines, il existe une *qu'ida*...’ malheureusement, la plupart du temps, la *qu'ida* est contre les femmes.’” (*Rêves* 62)

Mernissi herself has famously noted that “the Muslim man uses (social) *space* to establish male

domination” (*Scherazade Goes West* 213). In the female household’s collective psyche, thus, the *hammam* becomes just this type of controlled space. The women’s bath is even positioned as an initial door of symbolic separation between women and men which initiates the eventual total “cosmic frontier of power” as Mernissi puts it (*Rêves* 222) which “splits the planet in two halves”: male and female. Mernissi’s Aunt states

“ ‘Les hommes ne comprennent pas les femmes et les femmes ne comprennent pas les hommes. Et tout commence quand les petites filles sont séparées des petits garçons dans le hammam....il y a deux sortes de créatures sur la terre d’Allah: d’une cote les puissants et de l’autre cote les faibles.’ ” (*Rêves* 232).

In one instance an “erotic stare” from a four year old boy in the bath signaled to all the women who cared for him that it was

“ La fin d’enfance...Samir était ramené à la maison comme un male triomphant... on faisait des commentaires sur sa virilité et on en plaisantait .... (il) devait cesser de se rendre au hammam des femmes et aller dans celui des hommes.”(*Rêves* 230)

To this end, as the *onsen/sentô*, one seemingly sees this bath as again creating submission to strategy, in that it acts as a symbolic doorway through which the boys walk to leave childhood (leave the maternally-controlled bath) to enter the male bath from which they will commence their adulthood of patriarchal privilege. In this transition to the men’s bath, we see Samir gain admission to a society where he will have utter command of both baths, and thus greater access to influencing social space in general: the women’s and the men’s. He, in the future, might aid his wife’s tactics to encourage her self-expression in this small sphere or, equally, he may not.

### **Space of transition**

Furthermore, the existence of the women’s *hammam* in Mernissi’s memoir also acts as a type of site of transformation, similar to Turner’s hut, at least for the boy in this community. It is a rite-of -manhood passage space in which a boy is able to stay for a short time. It is in leaving the space (Samir’s infancy ends when he leaves for the male space) that he, as Turner’s ludic players, through the rite of passage of having an erotic stare, or exhibiting other manly

characteristics, is recognized a man and brought into the male *hammam*. From this exchange, not only does he become a man but the “cosmic separation” that starts in the bath continues: While the women toy with beauty masks and ludically joust for power with strategy, the men have no need of this, he states; they have the power already and it is not toy power. Although Aunt Habiba argues that if men wore beauty masks, not battle masks, the world would “be a better place”(Rêves 222), later young Samir, a boy of now only nine, states wisely that no, men don’t need masks because “men have different skin”( Rêves 10).

Again here we see the liminality of the “real” bath as a space of social transformation and reckoning -“growing up”- and for the young boy, a split occurs; instead of re-integration, he experiences “a recognition of the permanence of the schism”(Carlson 27) there, between that of the world of boys and men, and also that of women. From the female world, the bath as an arena of nurturing and games, an expressive, vibrant political and social zone of hugs, caresses, sweet melon drinks, long naps against warm, protective aunts and mothers, ludic “thefts” and guerilla warfare, he leaves for that which is functional and dry and devoid of tactical bathing; the *hammam* of men. This is where one “just bathes, that’s all” and his assertion belies a truism: the men don’t need to be tactical, they embody strategy.

“Les homes ne pas besoin de soins de beauté...Les homes n’y mangent jamais, tu sais. Pas des amands, pas de boissons, pas de discussions ni de rigolades...Ils se lavent, c’est tout”(Rêves 231).

He will no longer be chasing his female cousin in a steamy bath or laughing at his uncle fleeing his aunt but rather he will be in a non-playful real bath, one that is joyless and very serious. So here one sees how the bath, is much more than Mernissi’s “Western” space of the Orientalist imagination. It is rather, one which is tactical and reactive, as well as liminal, in that it is a space of transformation and also, gendered boundaries.

Having now established how the shared non-fictional bath is functional for creating and maintaining, or arresting, *communitas*, and conducive for tactical bathing in two expository texts on the pools of Japan and Morocco, we will examine how the *bain turc* in a film is a space of tactical games for control between men and women, and also, part of an imaginative land of a “patriarchal dream” of Istanbul.

#### Endnotes:

- 1 To put this in a more colloquial manner, in terms of how tactical acts play out with everyday actions, let us examine a simple stroll. As “everyman” walkers (tactician) use a sidewalk to walk on (the “correct” usage, bowing to strategy, following rules) or walk *around* (“incorrect”, tactical, for example, a youth thumbing his nose at “convention” by deliberately walking across the “Do not Walk on the Grass” sign and avoiding the sidewalk yet ostensibly glancing at his watch and hence “not seeing it”) so too could we consider the bath as a type of sidewalk in this paper. Like the sidewalk that “appears” to everyday users and is designed to force them to walk in a prescribed manner, baths too, “appear” to everyday users and have prescribed social rituals that come with their usage.

## **Chapter Two: fictional, cinematic baths**

### **“Patriarchal Dreams” and Ludicity in *Hamam; Il bagno turco***

*Hamam; Il bagno turco* is a 1997 Italian film by Turkish-born Ferzan Özpetek, a resident of Italy for the past 50 years whose works are classified as “trans-national” (Girelli 23). He is considered to create cultural illustrations which challenge “rigid, stereotypical systems of thought” regarding Italian and Turkish national character and his oeuvre addresses identity politics and concepts of subjectivity in general (Girelli 23-4).

#### **Background of filmmaker, his oeuvre and his filmic hallmarks**

By viewing him in this light -“trans-national”- his critics and admirers posit Özpetek’s works mostly in terms of what their “function” is in defining a national, often Turkish or Eastern, identity for a Western audience. For some, a filmmaker’s trans-national positioning results, sometimes, in a viewpoint that is considered to be more “fluid” (Girelli 23), yet there has also been a debate in the academic community, if this should result in transnational directors being “freed from the burden of re-representation” (Girelli 23) and the possibility of being accused of its constraints; such as Orientalism. As Özpetek is neither effectively Turkish nor Italian (although he was born in Turkey, yet he has spent the bulk of his adult life in Italy) he has therefore benefited from this positioning in a “potentially higher perspective” (Girelli 24); transnationalism. A transnational viewpoint has afforded him the ability to play with highly Orientalist schemas and images and still be viewed as an “accented” filmmaker (Girelli 25) although he has also been considered Orientalist.

Yet now, more currently, he has come under scrutiny as owing to his public, due to this different view, a “freer, subtler, better re-representation of identity” (Girelli 25) i.e. not Orientalist, which would not allow his films to go “wherever they wish” (Girelli 25). Prior to this, he enjoyed the lush benefits of employing beautiful Orientalist images in his films, without the responsibility to answer for their exotic, and perhaps insulting or simplistic, portrayals of Eastern social spaces.

In this chapter, I will focus on how Özpetek’s Orientalist images of Istanbul and several Turkish baths in this film, are played out not only in the “selective” ancient scenery he focuses on (which Elisabetta Girelli discusses in her article “Transnational Orientalism: Frezan Özpetek’s Turkish dream in *Hamam* (1997)” ) which show a pre-modern Istanbul of exotic, decaying images, but also in his employment of a trope common to the Orientalist project: “Persian Letters”. These are voiceover travelogues, written by a former, Western female owner of a gay male bath in the film, with a hidden, politicized agenda, about the central *hammam* in the text. They circulate between expatriate characters and they concern Orientalist descriptions about the bath, and Istanbul. I argue that the creation of these, in the film, is part and parcel of several types of tactical games which the characters play, amidst themselves, which are tied with the baths of the film. Game playing via Orientalist vehicles is utilized, thus, to creatively lay claim to an ancient *hammam*.

To be more specific, Western female characters in the work symbolically fight for control of this powerful social zone of play and transformation by re-creating/controlling images of it to compete against patriarchy for it. Due to the fact that social space, in Muslim countries, is influenced more by males, as we saw in the last chapter, I argue that one could view this bath as greater patriarchal social space which is vied for by women. One will see this, for example, in

the exoticized, Orientalist “Persian Letters” which Anita the former owner who is Italian writes to her estranged sister, about the bath, which crow about her “acquisition” (toehold) into the Orient and describe it and Istanbul, thus create it imaginatively. She is the “ ‘first, Western mistress of a men’s bathhouse ‘ ”(D’Onofrio 166). This broadcasting underscores her own awareness of this purchase as being not only a viable economic venture but, additionally, a feminist venturing into. There are also other Eastern female characters in the work that involve themselves in a similar manner.

I also contend that, aside from the film’s “selective” Orientalist cinematography, creating Özpetek’s “Turkish dream” of Istanbul as Girelli states, we could consider his selective filmmaking as creating a “Patriarchal Dream” as well. His focusing on mostly male-only social spaces in the film, conjures up an image of a patriarchal Istanbul *d’autre fois* which female characters vie against. They do this by, again, seeking to own/destroy/image a small portion of this greater male-dominated city (the male bath, the *hammam* Mirror) which is the central bath in the piece.

## **Games**

Ludicity is central to Özpetek’s work. His “bi-games” in diegetic spaces have been posed as “cognitive explorations...structures which are conducive to self-knowledge and self-definition” for the characters in his films (D’Onofrio 163). Conscious, not only unconscious, ludic enactments, therefore, allow his characters to re-define their self-identity and social identity, on either a temporary or permanent basis.

Specifically, personages in his films often toy with their sexual and personal subjectivity, by exploring “queer/non-normative sexual and erotic practices” (D’Onofrio 164) to challenge themselves and others in their relationships such as one sees in not only *Hamam* but another film

of his *Le fate ignoranti*/Ignorant fairies (D'Onofrio 163). In the case of *Hamam*, this is Francesco, the Italian, married, supposedly heterosexual protagonist, clandestinely involving himself with a young Turkish boy who is not out either and who acts as a type of cultural/sexual tour guide and *Telak* (bath boy) for his experiencing Istanbul when he goes there to sell a *hammam* that he inherited from his dead aunt. They become lovers via their involvement of bathing in, and restoring, the ancient Turkish bath.

The bath is named the *Hammam* of Mirrors, a name which is an intimation to how it functions in the film as a vehicle for Francesco to see that his old, married, heterosexual, Italian life was not reflective of his true, interior personhood as queer (“non-normative”). In this paper, not only bisexual explorations but also acts of voyeurism/scopophilia will be discussed as aspects of ludicity in the work.

Specifically, my analysis will show how active looking and voyeurism is gendered in this film. As Laura Mulvey states, “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female.” (841) To some extent, this is also true in this text, but not completely in the manner in which it plays out in traditional cinema. Due to the fact that the men in the film are queer, female characters do not connote “to-be-looked-at-ness”(Mulvey 841) in the text. Rather, gazing becomes often more of an issue of power, than of pleasure or of mere sexual titillation. Female characters will be shown as often relegated to viewing male-inhabited social space, and men, from exterior, less-empowered view-points. They gaze with longing for not only the emotionally neglectful men, whom they desire, who are not interested in them, but also for the power that being a male connotes in this society.

Whereas for males, they are the possessors of an “active look” but again, due to the homosexual aspect of the film, this plays out differently. Bi and queer men are shown as using

voyeurism of women, such as in a key scene where a pair of male lovers secretly spy on female bathers in a women's *hammam*, (see endnote 2) to empower themselves sexually and to bond homosocially to further a homosexual erotic connection between them. Furthermore, scopophilia, as Laura Mulvey defines it, "looking itself as a source of pleasure" (839), becomes a manner by which women fight back to force their way, symbolically, into male-inhabited social space. "Madame", a sensual, free-spirited former owner of a queer male bath, will be shown as using scopophilia to control and insert herself into her bath. She speaks of her pleasure of watching the men, in a series of letters which she sends to her sister.

She also places a female statue in the center of the bath, that I read as a symbolic object, a type of panopticon, through which she forces the male-bodies to be placed within "her" symbolic vision. In constructing the bath this way, as centered around secretive, controlling and pleasurable scopophilic watching, I argue that Madame heightens her "identification with the image seen" (Mulvey 840); this being gay males. She is a marginalized woman, an unmarried, female Western expatriate in 1950's-60's Istanbul. Her use of scopophilia "shows (her) fascination and her recognition of ( her) like...ego libido"(Mulvey 841). Being a spectator at her bath, over her male clients, reveals her jealousy and her pride and mostly, her identification with them; like her, they, as well, are nervy, secretive, romantic, yet earthy. She, being female, is not able to exercise her masculine, sexually predatory side, but, via scopophilia she is, at least symbolically.

### **The bath as imaged in Orientalist tropes and as a "playground"**

Tactical bathing in this film, thus centers on Western characters utilizing the *hammam* as a zone for psychological games for emotional connection, disconnection and acceptance. One also sees men and women vying for control of this crucial traditional, Eastern social space which

is threatened with being torn down. A predatory female, a Turkish modern developer, wishes to buy it, destroy it, and make its terrain a Western-style shopping plaza. As mentioned, a creating and circulating of Orientalist images of the bath between Western characters (“Persian Letters”) occurs. These seek to explain Istanbul and the bath’s pull to other Westerners, and Francesco himself attempts to use them, when offering them to his wife, as an “explanation” for his deception and betrayal when she discovers his infidelity with his boyfriend. Francesco slyly uses the social-stage of the bath as a play-space to toy with his growing awareness of his attraction for men, while avoiding the psychological threat of this knowledge. His tactical renovation of the bath (he is the architect who renovates it), to incite voyeurism and/or replicate his Aunt’s scopophilic- and controlling voyeuristic- bath, couples with a rarified view of Istanbul, created by this filmmaker, to show a city that seems caught in the past. It is selectively patriarchal and ancient as Girelli notes. This is the perfect city and play-space, thus, for Francesco to toy with his new, queer identity. Istanbul’s patriarchal culture emotionally cradles him and he, as a macho Italian man, can feel comfortable exploring this aspect of his sexuality in a city that is replete with queer males, who as his lover, appear heterosexual.

### ***Hamam* as an Orientalist text and a space of games**

Özpetek has been defined as a filmmaker whose representation of the *hammam* in this film is “embedded in an essentially Orientalist discourse.”(Girelli 23) “The dilapidated hammam (is) the symbol of Turkey, a country which throughout the film remains profoundly exotic and archaic” (Girelli 23); to this end the bath is The East. Yet she softens this accusation of an Orientalist soak by stating that this exoticism is positive not “bigoted”, as his “use of Orientalist code...serves the director’s mnemonic strategy by framing and conserving a specific national

image” (Girelli 23), nevertheless, it is, again, the portrayal of the *hammam* that cultural critics consider Orientalist.

A surfeit of critical articles contain this accusation. They focus on Orientalist images in popular Western constructs of the bath and often ignore other aspects of it. This latter being, for example, its potential as a social space for play and tactical acts, such as I outlined in the first chapter of this thesis.

Girelli’s reading, additionally, neither identifies nor discusses in depth the other Orientalist tropes in the film such as the filmmaker’s inclusion of “Persian Letters” which describe the East and the bath for the Italian expatriate characters. These are as the real Orientalist travelogues and letters of another time. My interest in focusing on these in this chapter is to outline how the filmmaker’s orientalism assists in the creation of the games that are played. This chapter, therefore, will address these above concerns. That the bath’s Orientalist appearance is the central focus, is again, somewhat limiting and the missives in the text about it, have not been fully explored.

I will expand my analysis of a ludic bath (one that is not merely Orientalist) from the “real” baths in Chapter One to another fictional one in this section that functions in a similar manner; it has been portrayed as Orientalist by scholars yet also, in part, is defined as ludic. I argue that both these views are pertinent but can be analyzed in slightly different manners (as tactical) than scholars Girelli and D’Onofrio posit them in their two articles.

In regards to these two authors’ claims, to recap before going into my analysis: The central baths (The *Hammam* Mirror and another male bath) and the image of Istanbul itself, has been situated in Girelli’s discourse as both an Orientalist trope (23) and also as a selective image of Istanbul and the East that positively creates “opposition” to the unattractive modernity of Italy

as it is filmed (30). It is thus a “Turkish Dream”, an imaginary city, which is a utopia: a metropolis which values family, friendship and an embracing of a slower, less hectic lifestyle. In the latter author’s work (D’Onofrio) one has Istanbul and the bath as a space of “bisexual/bicultural games” which are “non-competitive.” (D’Onofrio 163) However I argue that Girelli is somewhat reductive and that the games that D’Onofrio identifies are slightly different in terms of those that the female characters are said to play: I would state that the women compete for equal representation of social space in Istanbul, via owing and/or attempting to acquire this bath, and thus therefore the games are quite competitive. As a result, this chapter attempts to address and outline various other avenues by which we can explore this ludic pool in Özpetek’s film while keeping part of these scholars’ work in mind.

### **Practiced male spaces and rituals**

To address the reductive aspect of Girelli’s argument: I would debate that her discussion of Istanbul as imaged as pre-modern, a city where modernity is “erased” (30) by Özpetek in this film to show it as timeless and unmoving, comes up short. One also has obvious evidence, in viewing the “selective” filming of the city, of a heightened portrait of its urban spaces as painted as “idealistically”, and falsely, patriarchal, rather than merely not “modern.”

To be specific, one sees a multiplicity of images of male-only/male-mostly social spaces and events in this “selective” filming that Girelli correctly notes in her article, which carve the metropolis in the audience’s eyes. These shots, however, are not merely Orientalist in their visions; additionally they are paternalist, in that they create an illusion of a “practiced” “timeless” patriarchal city replete with its requisite gender-specific (male) gatherings and regions.

By this I mean to say that, Istanbul, daily, in the film, is unveiled as formed into male-only/mostly space, with the practices of the everyday lives of the men which mold it and also clever shots and scenes that show women as excluded, marginalized or jettisoned. To this end, just as easily as daily veiling and customary silence would practice obedience to male hegemony for the women, men in this film nurture their paternalism via traditional daily acts which underline their right to monopolize most convivial occasions.

For example, these men's daily customs are such as the omnipresent scenes of their often bathing together in the male-only *hammams* and resting and drinking tea there and bantering with the other men, attending sports events together and drinking coffee in male-only cafes. The majority of the scenes in the film where these acts occur reveal to the audience a charming Istanbul *d'autrefois* where social space was inhabited and controlled mostly by men and still is. Orientalism, thus, is blended with paternalism in the film. This recreation of the patriarchal zones and events are only partly pre-modern as much in these scenes blends the old with the new. These scenes also show us social areas/rituals where women are physically shown as sidelined and pulled out of space.

For example the circumcision party is both presented as a modern day situation and also, obviously, hailing back to another time. The scene takes place in a traditional, moldering courtyard and it is one which shows mostly only men dancing exuberantly, and drunkenly, in a rotating, joined circle whilst celebrating the event; women are on the periphery. Specifically we see Fusun, Mehmet's sister who is in love with Francesco and who is ignorant that he is dallying with her brother, gazing darkly and passionately at Francesco dancing, whilst she is ignoring her own boyfriend. Other women circumnavigate the party, serving food. Perran, the mother of Francesco's lover, is shown being pulled out of the dancing circle where she is one of the few

women (again, it is 90% mostly male) by her husband. It appears that he is angry with her. We have seen that they have a relationship that is founded mostly on equality. For example, she asserts herself to him in their home when she is unhappy on several occasions. However, this is the exception. In public, this imaging of women on the outskirts or pulled from the male ritual of the circle dance, coupled with the other images of patriarchy, including for example those of little boys wearing paper crowns which attest to their societal place and high value, offer us a clear image of the city's Muslim community as dominated by men and served by women. Publically females kowtow to the men.

Besides this scene, the scroll of male-only or male-mostly space is impressive. There is also a mostly male sports event which is modern; Mehmet and Francesco chaperone Fusun, who looks longingly (again) at Francesco, and they then escort her home and leave to traverse the city until dawn...thus practicing their patriarchal privilege while she is safely at home, again, sidelined from social space and intercourse. She is shown in a fleeting scene of frustration; turning off the light, as she no longer will wait for them to come home. There is another scene of Francesco and Mehmet in a male-only bath where they will later crawl on a roof to voyeuristically "capture" women in an adjoining bath by peeking in a skylight, a male-only café which is shown as segued from a bath-scene, thus giving the impression of the camera floating from male-space to male-space. There is a key scene when Francesco is realizing that he is enamored with Mehmet, at dusk, when the men are shown as examining motorcycles and homosocially bonding with a large formation of men with no women in attendance.

Istanbul's thoroughfares thus, as portrayed by Özpetek, are predominantly avenues where women are escorted by men, shown as partially or completely veiled if walking alone, or often isolated from the social milieu. We see this when Marta comes upon an old gypsy woman in a

rain storm who is seemingly homeless and seeking refuge in an abandoned building. There is another shot of a mysterious, veiled woman who Marta happens upon in a deserted street, and upon who she looks, bewildered and awkward seeming, in her modern (for the Istanbul that Özpetek is portraying) outfit of a sleeveless dress. Aside from the Turkish female property developer, most women in the city of this film are portrayed as married or coupled and thus living in shared space, but not entering public space as frequently as the men. Perran stays at home, Fusun only leaves for her studies, most of the women in the neighborhood are shown as hollering to each other from windows of their homes rather than visiting each other. Madame Anita, the former owner of the *hammam* and Francesco's aunt seems to have been the sole eccentric who had her own business and life at one point and she was, of course, an unattached Italian and thus an outsider. Fusun is getting engaged to someone that she does not love, and her father notes that, at nineteen this is a "good age." One could continue. These frequent images of male-only, or mostly male events, with sidelined women who stay in the domestic sphere and are expected to marry, thus, as Girelli notes, does create "erasure" in terms of the city seeming less *modern*. However this erasure is not merely occurring for the skyline but for the female populace.

Istanbul is shown as less equally inhabited by women in the public sphere and this creates an image of a timeless city. This is obviously underscored when we see Fusun, for example, knocking on the window of a male only café and not feeling comfortable enough to enter, as she tries to attract Francesco's attention. Women can only remain on the outside, looking in.

### **A gendered cartography**

By examining the "male spaces" in the film and how they hint at a much larger swath of more masculine public space than current-day reality dictates, Özpetek's subtlety needs to be

discussed. He does not present Istanbul as patriarchal due to obvious delineation, but rather he creates discrete contrasts which give the audience the impression of moving, with Francesco, into a more “authentic” and ancient, patriarchal, Istanbul than he encountered the first few days when he was a tourist.

For example, in comparing two cafes, one sees at the beginning of the film a “mixed-sex” European- seeming one, and at the mid-point of Francesco’s gay “conversion”, when he is falling in love with both Mehmet and Turkey, one sees him having moved from this current space to a male-only one. Francesco transports to a café occupied solely by men from the more modern one that we see earlier where he sits in at the start of the movie when he is still heterosexual (when he answers his phone after the first evening in his hotel). This is shown as light, bright and occupied by women and also European-looking people. There is a female waitress.

The male café, in contrast, is portrayed as dark and enclosed and as a space where, seemingly, Fusun feels uncomfortable entering, as she does not as she taps at the window and places her face up to its glass. It is as if she is aware of a societal code that limits her entrance. Although this scene is posited as a neutral informational one (where Fusun is shown as seeking out Francesco, thus a clip that merely moves the story and characters’ relationships forward) what is portrayed in actuality is also the underlying cultural background that encompasses and underlines the exchanges occurring here. The combined images of Fusun’s hands and face at the window and the men as a whole in the café who are oblivious to her, literally not seeing her, coupled with male-only workers, reinforce the café space as an exclusive male domain in Istanbul, into which women can only longingly gaze. The traversals from more gender-neutral social spaces into increasingly male-only spaces such as the male-only bath and this newly

“excavated” male café create the implication that Francesco, on his journey to becoming “Oriental”, has chosen this segregated zone above other cafes.

Like the dancing circle that opened for him, Turkish patriarchy is also opening to embrace him here. This male café, this male dancing circle, this male only bath (in which men are able to play with women by voyeuristically possessing them from a rooftop, when they leave “their” pool to actively gaze at them secretly) these segregated spaces seamlessly link as one larger swath of masculine territory imaginatively. This tactical creation for the audience, by Özpetek, of an imagined, gendered, spooling of a series of Eastern social spaces gives the impression that Francesco spends the hours of his day separate from women, optimizing his new-found “Oriental” ability to monopolize a large amount of social space. The bath thus becomes not only a symbol of the past, and the East as Girelli correctly notes, but, I would argue a specific patriarchal past, which like Mernissi’s *hammam* in the first chapter, is controlled by men. It symbolizes not only the East but male-social dominion.

### **Sidelined women who “oversee” male-space; voyeurism**

Furthermore, these scenes of sidelined women who peer into male zones converge into each other. Fusun gazing longingly from the periphery into those male events/spaces of the dancing circle and the café at her gay love-object, links to a continuum in the plot-line later with other shots of female voyeurism/watching. These are repetitive and these looks are always directed at social spaces where women cannot physically enter.

One has, for example, Madame’s voyeuristic eye in the gay, male bath in the past when as merely “Madame” (her moniker itself almost sounding a bit like a dominatrix or literally, female-pimp) she watches, controlling the male- zone of their pleasure by owning this space where she can watch, and forcing her watching on them, as a further price for their frequenting

this bath. In a certain manner she takes in images of them bathing and lovemaking in it, and, again, controls by designing the bath with her statue/panopticon that she places in the center of the room. She also of course scopophilically watches as she notes that she enjoys viewing them. This pleasure is revealed in her Persian Letters, one hears her recalling how she “indulg(ed).. the caprices” of men by creating the bath and overseeing it.

Other female characters watch as well. Marta spies on her husband Francesco from the *hammam* doorway as he has sex with Mehmet. There is also the female “watching” panopticon of the statue, centered in the bath, which Francesco restores and re-places there. It is an image of a woman that is centered in the male-only space, so that she can symbolically “see” everything. There is the female Turkish property developer overlooking her plastic model of the mall/neighborhood that she desires to construct which will destroy this male, gay bath. All these join with Perran’s image attempting to celebrate equally in the dancing circle but being jettisoned and, again, Fusun gazing sorrowfully from the outskirts of the café through the windows, into it.

In this text these women are all portrayed as either disallowed entrance to, or unwelcome in, the classically male zones in the metropolis. Even when they participate, they are not historically considered as equal and thus we have a repeated pattern of the women as *longingly gazing into*, yet the men as more *actively inhabiting*, the male-spaces. The Turkish female property developer, who aggressively inserts herself in male-social spaces by purchasing them to destroy them and build “modernity”, is thus the natural-resentful- by-product of this repeated pattern, established in the film, of women being socially marginalized.

She also symbolizes the threat of the phallic woman and moreover, a decidedly dangerous, non-maternal one, more so than the other female characters in the film. They react as well to this ostracizing by the men, but in tactical manners, and they are also are portrayed as

motherly. “Madame” is shown as having cradled Mehmet, Francesco’s lover, in the bath as a child, and Perran is portrayed as a matriarch and keeper of tradition in the family. Both the other women who are attracted to Francisco-Marta and Fusun- are shown as nurturing and forgiving; not this real-estate magnate, however.

### **The threat of the phallic female**

The property developer is truly the image of the enraged, phallic woman; beautiful yet able to be dismissed as a sexual object in Hollywood as she is “of a certain age”, she is “the sexually mature woman as non-mother” (Mulvey 838) who has none of the other female characters’ empathy or softness. Violent and both self-possessed yet unpredictable, she orders male underlings around, as we see with Francesco’s real-estate broker who insists that he sell the bath to her, while waving the broken finger he received from her thugs. She is a killer: in the end, she effectively disembowels Francisco, when he will not vend the property to her. To this end, she operates outside of Laura Mulvey’s “woman as icon” (844) whose presence, in provoking “castration anxiety” (844) in men, is subject to being dealt with in two reductive manners; becoming investigated, demystified and devalued, or being made into a sexual object of fetishism (844). As Mulvey’s article analyzes “traditional narrative film’s”(846) treatment of females, this is not surprising.

In this woman’s behaving with aggression and lack of scruples in the male-dominated city-space, literally blowing its old, patriarchal quarters apart, to make zones for modern areas (which we see, in this film as occupied by both genders, i.e. mall, “European-style” cafe), Özpetek outlays the cost to patriarchal society in not abnegating social space to another gender. However, who solves this problem, is not a man but a woman, in the film. Marta, Francesco’s wife, does not cede the property of the bath, which she inherits after his murder, yet oddly, the

female property developer ceases to concern herself with the bath, and she disappears from the narrative. If the average, cowed woman, “stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions...by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”(Mulvey 838) than she is missing in this narrative as all the women, on some level, “make meaning” in the trajectory of the plot, aside from being objects and screens upon which male-fantasies play; they just don’t do this initially.

To this end, the mockup of the plastic skyline of Istanbul and a future mall which will develop over the destroyed bath, that the Turkish female developer oversees and gazes over- “a middle-aged woman with steely eyes” (Girelli 29), (Girelli identifies this woman as an example of Özpetek’s antipathetic portrayal of modernity in Istanbul) I read as feminist reactivity. This facsimile of the city aligns more with this repetition of the female as sidelined from active social space and thus attempting to watch over it/actively interact with it/form it metaphorically.

Thus one could state that these female characters are all women/womanly figures (statue, women owners or potential owners of this bath-space, cuckolded wives) who can *watch passively*, but not control *actively*, that which occurs in male space between men, until such a time as one sees some of them tactically attempting to insert themselves in the *hammam* later in the film. This is indeed whether they are Eastern or Western women. In the café’s realm, as in the *hammam*, the two men- Mehmet and Francesco- avoid women by indulging their male privilege to enjoy this segregated arena and women watch them helplessly. But this happens throughout the film.

Özpetek’s *Orientalism* -in terms of his “selective” filming of ageless spaces and events- thus contributes to a form of Paternalism in his attitude towards his female characters, in that by

not only showing an ancient, but specifically a patriarchal “dream” of Istanbul in his gendered, “practiced” spaces, a less realistic portrayal of the metropolis is created, not that this is a requirement. In this “Patriarchal Dream”, women are shown as less present in society and therefore less empowered.

His repeated portrayal of female characters in not only this work but others, additionally, reveals them as dominated to some degree in the societies that he depicts. For example, in Serena Anderlini-D’Onofrio’s article, one sees that Özpetek’s plot in *Hamam* is almost identical to *Le fate ignorant*: both films have female characters who discover that their husbands are queer and they still remain with them and, to some degree, try to *compete* with the men for their husbands’ attentions.

### **Bisexual Istanbul**

However Özpetek’s frequent portrayal of men as not homosexual, but rather as *bisexual*, highlights another aspect of his use of gendered cartography to “draw” Istanbul in this work. By portraying multiple male arenas as *blending* in the film- specifically, the male dominated *hammam* where men socialize only amongst themselves and also the newly “revived” male café as opposed to a more integrated one that we have seen earlier- Özpetek not only draws the line between the two arenas as one continual male space where women are not allowed to enter, but he also does something else: He presents a “textbook representation” of something that is not just Orientalist but a specific re-created “Orient”; an East where men toyed with bisexuality not as a sexual act but as a *homosocial* one. This is the Patriarchal Orient of old where men controlled both the social arenas of the café and bath and where there was often “gender-bending” at both these spaces (Ozkocak, 975).

## Historic homosocial bathing and imbibing

The ancient Ottoman empire had its own homosocial bath and bath boys who resembled women as well as multiple male-only cafes with gender bending “female” dancers (Ozkocak 975 fig 2), which were truly *men*, as women were disallowed from the public sphere. Indeed, bath boy encounters backgrounded ancient homosocial baths in Istanbul where, as texts show, bisexuality, homosexual acts, and cross-dressing figures were common in the male space of the *hammam*. One also sees this in the images of busty and almost hermaphrodite Tellaks in historic texts such as *Hubanname (The Book of the Handsome Ones)* (<http://www.gay-art-history.org/gay-history/gay-art/turkey-gay-art/hubanname-gay/enderuni-hubanname-gay-tellak.html>). Historically the bath was *homosocial* not always homosexual but with strong aspects of erotic undertone. This bath does not speak of queerness in the film (D’Onofrio’s “bisexual games”) but also of historical usage of the bath as a “play-zone” between men. In this bath men enjoyed the attentions of *Tellaks* who were as women (effeminate, small, curvaceous) yet the space also provided the ability to enjoy and relax away from home with other men; it was also an arena to drink tea, talk of politics and sports with other men. Due to this historic grounding of the bath as a homosocial area with homosexual activities in it, one aspect of the bath of the film and how it has been described as a “decayed steam bath” which is a “selective, decrepit view of Istanbul’s cityscape...a stereotypical representation of Turkishness” (Girelli 26) is that we can view the space as yes, harkening back to a “nostalgia” for a bygone Turkey, as Girelli states but one that is less Orientalist than accurate, if the narrative had been set in a different time period.

Its queerness/erotic aspect is not - as Mernessi argues in her memoir of the Oriental bath-

as a product of an Orientalist mindset, a way of Occidentals “seeing” bathing in a *hammam* (*Le harem* 107-8) in the “East” as sexual and “lascivious” which is incorrect historically “Cette relation entre le bain et la promiscuité sexuelle est totalment absent de la culture musulmane” (107). Rather initially from a sociological standpoint, *Il bagno turco*’s “gay” bath is indeed grounded in a former historical, homosocial reality where perhaps “queer” acts were not as fraught with issues of identity. The temporality of the film is problematic, in that, for it to create a more utopian space, it needs to be situated in a more ancient era.

To this end, rather than considering the bath’s sensual appearance -“haunting” with its “loin-clothed men” (Girelli 23)- as an *Orientalist* representation” one could view it as historicized. In the instances of bisexual acts (“play” as D’Onofrio states) in the bath between formerly “monosexual” Francesco and his male lover in the film, this could also be considered just the “norm”; bathing bisexuality in controlled homosocial intervals in the male Turkish bath as an historical fact.

More specifically, one can view Özpetek as toying with the image of this bath of another time and introducing a tactical element via allusion: his re-creation of a playful homosocial bath alludes to a simpler time where queer experimentation between men was not as charged with decisions of sexual identity. We can view the character of Mehmet, the much younger man who introduces Francesco to the bath, as embodying the historic role of *Tellak*. These young men who helped bathe the male citizens of the Ottoman Empire, and were also sexually available, did not create problems in their heterosexual lives; they were contained in the bath.

Mehmet is not truly a *Tellak*, he lives above the bath with his family, yet at the same time this classic image (a younger boy with an older male lover in the bath) is hardly uncommon in Oriental tropes and moreover, it goes back to ancient Greece. Nor is this absent in historical texts

such as in the above excerpt from *Dellâkname-i Dilküşâ*. His metaphoric living-space as practically in the bath, and his role in instructing Francesco in the use of the bath - in one scene he explicates the “philosophy” of the bath as they relax on the slippery porcelain tiles, for example- show him as functioning similarly to a *Tellak*.

“...absorbed in their flesh mollified by the steam...as Francesco observes all of this, Mehmet offers a brief lesson in Turkish bath philosophy...(one is there to) ‘relieve the flesh so that one can get to relieve the spirit’ (D’Onofrio 168).

The age difference between the two, additionally, positions Mehmet, metaphorically, more in the role of the *Tellak* than the lover. He is there to introduce Francesco to the pleasures of Turkey via this liminal world of the bath which is portrayed as a portal that literally takes Francesco back in time to another bathing world. Mehmet is as many “Oriental” *Tellaks* who “translated” the space for Western heterosexual males *d’autrefois*.

To this end, Girelli’s “nostalgic” bath of *Hamam* that she cites as Orientalist, could be read in another light; as Özpetek re-creating a former older Istanbul, as she herself notes, that indeed did have erotic undertones of homosociality in the bath that merged with homosexuality. It was historically both a homosocial space and a homosexual one as well, and of course, for many male customers, probably “just” a bath.

### **The bath, the “male” café: patriarchal, tactical zones of Özpetek’s “Istanbul”**

The bath and the male café, as introduced above, were places of male refuge in ancient Istanbul where men could control female image and “bothersomeness” (*fitna*) in a manner that they, perhaps, could not on the domestic front by “repainting” them, not on a tableau, like in Ingres’ world, but on a *social stage* with the form of a “female”. By this I mean, the *image* of a woman, but one that was, in fact, a man. There were many similarities between the all-male café and the bath historically; they were both spaces of male solace -women were often not allowed-

and furthermore there were aspects of “female” cross-dressed men in both (the bath had busty/effeminate Tellaks, and the male café often had males dressed as women). In an article on cafes in the Ottoman Empire, for example, we see “two (male) dancers dressed up as women (who) perform in the foreground using the open space of the interior.” (Ozkocak 975 fig 2) Cross-dressed men in the café also wait on the men. In this time, during earlier years of the Ottoman Empire, patriarchal social arenas such as the male-only café, and bath, were a common part of daily life for men, linked together by a normative theme; they were as a place to relax with the female “image” in the form of the feminine bath boy (*Tellak*) and gender-bending characters such as waitresses and dancers which were in actuality, men. Yet, happily they were absent of difficult-to-contain female “reality”; trouble, *fitna*. This was due to the absence of actual women or at least one could say respectable women, as the coffee house also was licentious “The entertainment could also include dancing girls and hashish.” (Collaco 63) The ability for males to unwind in a controllable social space, with “women” not women, or at least not laudable ones, resulted, I would argue, in men historically toying with actual females; failing to relate equally and fairly to women, in both their private lives and in public arenas, by reveling in female image/absence only to homosocially bond.

In regards to this last comment, although one does not see this exact condition in the film, in that the female characters do obviously enter the space of at least one bath -The *Hamam* of Mirrors which was founded by Madame Anita- nevertheless, in Özpetek’s film we also see this historicized, tactical “playful” use of male social space to exclude women from public spheres in several scenes, as has been outlined. Yet there is also an intentional use of their *images* in the bath, by the male characters, to further their homosocial/sexual agendas and desires.

One pertinent scene, as mentioned briefly, is on the rooftop between a male and female *hammam* when the men become voyeurs and peek at female bodies together, and in doing so, court each other. Before I describe this scene I would suggest that the analogy of the female figures of these women, what “she” represents in both Turkish and Italian culture to both Mehmet and Francesco -as an object of scopophilic desire on which they can project their power in “capturing” her- is transferred to supplement the skein of homosexual desire that is already coursing between them and enhance it. By controlling the women’s images (“capturing” them) with their shared scopophilic/voyeuristic quest, but by not truly capturing them (i.e. sexually engaging with them) the men utilize a shared experience of forbidden, nervy watching to symbolically distance themselves from their expected heterosexual roles in life in their individual cultures of Turkey and Italy -to be straight men and marry and procreate- while simultaneously enjoying the empowering experience of male privilege; the “hunt”.

In doing so ( metaphorically hunting and conquering women together in the women’s bath on just this *purely visual, not actual*, level ) the female bathers are reduced to images by the men. They actually invade their highly private zone. Note also, the difference in the power of looking at a person in this work. The longing, emotionally needy gazing that the women perform, on male-space and male bodies, in this film is countered by an invasive possessing of scopophilic proportions by the men of female space and female bodies. The tactical move, here, though, is that the male gazes of these men symbolically, at least for them, in this moment, force the women’s bodies back towards embodying one of their “primary” “purposes” in *patriarchal* society; as objects of desire/ hollow images that a man can use to prove himself as a man. Thus the gaze is also voyeuristic in that it demystifies the women and devalues them. The return to the status quo is achieved. Patriarchal agenda and homosocial/sexual agenda converge in that the

female image is utilized to empower a man psychologically whether he be straight, gay or just “playing” with queer moments.

### **Scopophilia/Voyeurism**

In regards to the scene itself, the men (Francesco and Mehmet) have spent the morning in bathing in the bath. Amidst the steam, partially naked, they play verbally with each other, flirting by discussing women’s bodies and methods of bathing. Francesco would like to know specifically how women depilate in the bath, and even whether they do, and Mehmet also discusses an early childhood memory when he bathed as a child, naked, with Francesco’s late aunt, which shows him as dreaming and her body, and the bath, as womb-like. In both these conversations, there is a common thread of course; the image of naked women, and the male bonding aspect of male talk as needing a heterosexual element, discussion of the naked female body/maternal energy, to enable a more comfortable connection.

Francesco uses the homosocial aspect of the bath to inquire if women shave themselves, in doing so he playfully, and somewhat anxiously, introduces eroticism in their discussion, but in a manner that segues him safely from the heterosexual realm (discussing women) to a homosocial realm. A proposal is reached, finally, for the men to do some research on this. The men go to the rooftop to stare voyeuristically at the nude bodies of women in an adjacent *hammam*, through a steam vent. In doing so Mehmet conveniently stabilizes himself by putting his arm around Francisco. To this end, the men utilize the female image which they introduce into a male zone (the male *hammam*) as a bridge to begin to act on their mutual desires; Mehmet’s touch can be construed equally one way or another; as a sexual touch, or as a manly macho pat on the back of complicity in their voyeurism.

Here we see a tactical use of the homosocial potential of the pool as a non-threatening social space, by the men, to appropriate female bodies while simultaneously courting each other. In doing so, they toy with the physical constraints of gendered physical/social space to maximize their erotic connection; the tension of the illegality of their voyeurism, the frustration of not being able to sexually touch each other, nor the women, accentuates and heightens their erotic connection.

Francesco's use of the bath is ludic and manipulative; in it he introduces himself, and continually re-introduces himself, in subsequent baths, to the "Orient" in a manner that allows him to emotionally avoid the threat of discovering his gay new identity, while simultaneously discovering it. Being from Italy and married, the homosocial aspect of the bath, the steam, the draped nude bodies, the intimate discussions, softens its powerful liminoid qualities as a bridge through which he plays with homosexual desire. The bath thus, in being originally a space which he can pitch to himself as macho/social and transcultural becomes that which evolves into a space of sexual reckoning. It is in the *hammam* that he first bonds with both Istanbul culture and more compellingly, with his future lover, Mehmet on seemingly a purely cultural level, but in actuality, on a more emotional plane.

Thus one intriguing aspect of this bath in the film, is that it is used similarly to the *hammam* in ancient times in Istanbul; as a social bridge from homosocial to homosexual connection and moreover with the accompanying use of the female image. This latter, is both the on-looking female statue of the bath (the panopticon which I will discuss shortly) and also the live women bathers, as well as Madame Anita's former overseeing of the gay- bath as a sort of indulgent mother figure/fag-hag. So, too, as with prior male bathers in historic Istanbul, does the main character of Francesco tactically bathe when he uses the *hammam* both as a means to

homosocially bond, and as a refuge from marital pressures and the *fitna* caused by female presence in his life as he comes to terms with another bi-identity and evades his wife's questioning eyes. Yet also, ironically, he exploits the bath as a conduit to relate to women, in order to manipulate their images to bond with his new lover. This occurs not only when he practices voyeurism over women's bodies via the bath, but also when he restores a female statue in the gay bath that he owns.

### **Panopticon**

This latter (statue) can also be read as a female maintained by the owner (Francesco) to supply the obligatory "womanly" historical presence in the bath; again we see this Ottoman desiring of female presence without female *fitna*. Madame's controlling Eastern men and their social space by designing and overseeing a gay bath, is twinned in her nephew's using the bath as a zone to manage women. Prior, he visually captured them in baths to homosocially bond with a man he finds attractive, and now he populates the bath with a central female statue who will watch the activity in it (but be unable to interfere with it). He also avoids women by using the bath as an excuse: he argues with Marta that he is unable to show her Istanbul when she arrives unexpectedly, due to his responsibilities in restoring the *hammam*. Furthermore, in painting and restoring the symbolic panopticon, the female statue and placing it back in the center of the circular bath, he creates a type of approving female image of his queer wanderings without his actual wife's disapproval; again a type of game.

Of course originally this statue was created by Madame Anita or perhaps it came with the bath. If it was created by her, one could read it as a metaphoric forcing of female presence into the bath, while the men bathed. Anita's letters show that she has bonded with the queer men, and that she enjoys watching them. The idea of an overseeing female image which will symbolically

allow her to get even closer to them, when she is not supposed to enter the space while they are co-joining, shows her controlling nature playing itself out on a creative and voyeuristic level: she might not be able to be there, but the statue, a type of female surrogate, will be. Again, this is a tactical move.

As far as restoring the statue, for Francesco, this titillates him, the idea of making love under a female gaze. One sees, in the end, how, when he dies, his death-throes are played out upon the visage of the statue, whose face falls into shadow as the music crescendos when he passes. The external female image (statue) becomes his feminine nature which is now internalized and taken into his body to die, with him. So one sees also how the statue and its accompanying image of femininity and female energy, embodied in it, functions as a bridge in the film for an interplay between the masculine and feminine sides of the conquerors of the bath.

Anita used the statue to control and access men, and male-space and energy, symbolically. The physical space that it occupies in the *hammam* is dominant; it is raised above the men, and as its position is a type of panopticon, it is all-seeing and knowing. Obviously it is not personified, able to see, but it symbolically, with its painted-on eyes, views what it before it, on a metaphoric level. This statue assists Anita in deploying her scopophilic glance and also her voyeuristic one. It draws forth the external, audacious, sexual energy of the men via voyeurism (her symbolic, secretive, controlling watching) and also via scopophilia; this latter being ego libido, the second aspect of scopophilia “developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego...the identification with the image seen”(Mulvey 840). In doing so, like the classic “fag-hag” she also thus accesses her own nery, masculine side.

One can see her, indeed, as a “fag-hag” as D’Onofrio correctly notes, but not bisexual as she stated, in that there is no evidence in the text that she is interested in women. She has been

married and there is no images of her that attest to her longing for women. As I stated previously, at the beginning of the chapter, her attraction to gay men turns on the lynchpin of the power that men hold in the societies into which she was born and in which she has chosen to live: Italy and Istanbul are both patriarchal social spaces. We have seen how emancipated Madame is, how much she must chafe at the constraints that bind her, a feisty, gorgeous, child-less émigré who is staking a claim as a woman in Istanbul in the 50's. Just due to the fact that she is a fag-hag, does not preclude that she is not heterosexual. Rather, she adores queer men and mothers them symbolically, constructing a home for them of sorts, to increase the breadth of their homosexual territory in Istanbul because they, as her, are marginalized. She “gets” them.

In Francesco's loving restoration of the statue ( which he paints in the scene when Marta is leaving him, Istanbul and their marriage) and in its symbolic death with him, the statue, for him, is not only a sexual, maternal figure whose presence excites him, but also his lost softer side. It is that which he has rediscovered in the slower, more authentic life that he has chosen in Istanbul with Mehmet.

Thus, although one could easily concur at the first viewing of the film, that, yes, Istanbul is presented as intentionally pre-modern and thus embodying Orientalist means by which Eastern space is constructed as “exotic, old, decadent, seductive, profound, under threat and as “ ‘the Orient (as) synonymous with stability and unchanging eternity ‘ ” (Girelli quoting Said 28), this is only the most apparent reading of it. Although in the film one sees this Orientalist portrayal of it as she states initially, the East as “articulated through narratives of adventure, pleasure and revelations...position(ing) the Westerner in a specific set of relations to the East (embodying its) past glory and present decay” (Girelli 28), in multiple selective shots of the city, this is merely part of the picture. Girelli asserts that the Orientalist aspect of the film unfolds in how Özpetek

films “selective, decrepit view(s) of its cityscape.”(italics mine Girelli 26) which forms “modern Turkey (as) reduced to an unreal spatial dimension” (30) of ancient corridors which reveals orientalism. She additionally presents the plastic model of the city, which the villainous developer imagines will be built over Francesco’s *hammam*, as one such example of this “unreal” aspect. I however, consider the plastic city model as, again, evidence of another female character’s dreams of trespass into male-space (the male, traditional bath). Thus I view it is a positive, reactive, feminist claim to male, patriarchal, pre-modern space.

Furthermore, she states that modern images of the city are “filmed” as an example of “erasure” by Özpetek; modern is what is not shown in the film. According to her this is

“Modern apartment blocks, bland architecture, business areas, ugliness, slums...(while) merely a ten-minute walk separates the locations of Francesco’s hamam from high-rise buildings, banks and shopping centers...such a mono-dimensional representation of Istanbul is, of course, required by *Hamam*’s oppositional structure, where Italy’s empty modernity is contrasted to Turkey’s profound, enlightened antiquity.” (30)

Although it is true that the *hammam* is situated in a celebrated, older neighborhood, and there *are* images of veiled women who walk its streets, and there are also many images of modernity that are filmed in longshot (which thus distance it from the audience creating a feeling of disassociation) simultaneously one can see other images that are modern such as the shopping mall that Marta wanders through, and the modern European café. Istanbul is shown, really, as two worlds; modern and populated by both genders, or pre-modern and populated mostly by one.

This image of Istanbul as (primarily) publicly male-operated and populated, heightens one’s understanding of Madame’s desire to speak of her bath as a male-bath which is owned by a woman when she represents Istanbul and the *hammam* in letters to her sister. These, too, have an Orientalist structure to them and function: They are needed to market Istanbul to her sister, as a dynamic social space where a woman can succeed financially (more than in Italy at that time and

furthermore under seemingly difficult odds at that) and also to explain away her conflict with returning home.

### **“Persian Letters”**

In composing the letters which concern the bath and the East, Madame Anita, who is the original owner of the bath Mirror, the gay *hammam*, tactically portrays the city in such a manner that it is irresistible due to its Orientalist appeal. Classic images of the East that one encounters over and over in Orientalist letter-writing, for example Istanbul is mysterious ( “strange” and “waiting for her” ), implied as her destiny, are contained in the missives. It is also posited as a country where a Western woman can conquer.

“Istanbul has a strange breeze that I have never felt before...a vento ligero that takes away melancholia”... “Istanbul is what I have been searching for...How much time I have wasted...I have a feeling that it was here waiting for me, silent, as I chased after life”, “(The bath) has become an institution...I am the first Western Mistress of a bathhouse...It is my kingdom.”

This move of composing gushing Orientalist communiqués, allows Anita to circumvent explaining her real reason for leaving her Italian home; this is of course, tactical. Persian Letters thus become a means to explain abandonment, without really explicating it or asking for forgiveness; her sister is disallowed from the right to be angry because in doing so, she would be denying her sister happiness. The Orient is “what (Anita has) been searching for”.

We know from the letters that her sister and she have fought and that they will never again reunite. The cause of this disagreement is unknown and vague. She makes no mention of why in the letters which focus only on her sensual descriptions of the city. Furthermore these will also be used in the same manner by Francesco, as a form of half-hearted apology, when he hands them off to Marta to read, in order for her to understand, how, like for Madame, “The East” took ahold of him and he thus cheated on her.

Madame's comments on the strange lifting of her sadness by Istanbul's mere breeze, especially, offer echoes of Chateaubriand's own East, Judea, where seasonal melancholy does not only bring depression, but after, rejuvenation.

"a great ennui grips the heart; but when, passing from one solitary place to another, space stretches out without limits before you... far from depressing the soul (it) gives courage."(Said quoting Chateaubriand 117)

Her institutionalizing of the bath ("(the bath) has become an institution") and her crowing of this to her sister, of course, verbalize her Western need for dominion of Eastern space, which to her is a symbolic land of infinite possibilities. The bragging points to her desire to emotionally stabilize herself in this strange city, by creating her own miniature kingdom where she is in control ("It is my kingdom"). Istanbul's social-scape is a scrim onto which she can project her own longings, for a new territory where she can both renew her life and recreate a new self. Thus Istanbul is more symbolic, as a city, rather than merely a new opportunity. She could perhaps become this new Anita (emancipated owner of a gay social space in Italy) but the cost there, to her reputation, would be too high.

Her transmissions, to this end, offer an image of Istanbul and the *hammam* that is classically Orientalist. One can see, in the letters, the same, common image of an unknowable East equated with uplifting spiritual powers which bring redemption to Occidentals; a type of regeneration of a European life by exposure to the East that Flaubert for example, satirized (Said 115). Istanbul, the Bosphorus and her *hammam* are combined as a canvas upon which Madame can project her anxieties of her former squandered Western life in Italy ('How much time I have wasted') which was not enough and hinge her chance of happiness and self-fulfillment on an odd breeze and an Oriental notion of difference which will take away her unhappiness and give her dominion over a small cornerstone of Oriental society ("I am the *first*...") Thus they function as

travelogues which present the East to another Westerner who has not seen it, and furthermore, present it as a space of opportunity and emotional and psychological renewal.

The tomes function as similar to the Persian Letters of Montague and other Orientalist travelogues in another manner; their content belies the boastful attitude of Madame towards Istanbul, and the East in general, as a social-space which a Westerner can understand and translate for another Westerner. Here another Occidental can “conquer” as well; her comment on being the first, female, Western owner, for example, of a bath in Istanbul, reveals her true motives for being there; her quest for social freedom and movement. Her sister, after reading the letters, will develop a textual attitude towards the city as conquerable by clever Western, female expatriates, due to this. Furthermore they offer Anita’s image of herself to her sister as a type of savvy tour guide who is creating a travelogue of what the city is. Alongside this, she tactically creates a newer, happier, more emancipated image of Anita, the Western traveler (the owner of a real Eastern bath!) who understands the East, in her letters. In doing so, she potentially distances herself from the other Anita, the divorcee who was separated after a marriage of mere days (the Eastern coffee magnate who financed the *hammam*, and she, had a twenty day marriage), and is childless. This less empowered role would not allow her movement or respectability in many patriarchal societies such as both Italy and Turkey. By purchasing land in Istanbul, however, she can play the eccentric, emancipated émigré and in doing so she can trick herself into healing.

Madame also uses classic language of dominion in portraying herself as an adventuress, who is a type of tour-guide. In being able to introduce to her sister this “East” on which she positions herself, in the letters, as being a type of authority and in owning the bath we see how she implies in the letters that she has a type of inside scoop with the “natives”-“My clients talk to me, they confide in me”- and on all things Istanbul “here things move more slowly, they

vibrate your body”. Her trumpeting of her conquering gives the audience an image of Madame as having a two-fold goal with these letters. Although ostensibly she wants to heal the rift with her sister, the language and sole focus of the letters is descriptive and quite egocentric. They instead show her aim to be marketing herself and Istanbul as a place of discovery, conquering and obscurity in its unknowability (“strange” winds that one has never seen). Again what one has here is similar to an egotistical travelogue of Chateaubriand “je parle éternellement de moi” (Said quoting Chateaubriand 170). The East gives her herself and rather than her writing of it, as a separate thing, “her” East is used to access herself and the ability to speak eternally of herself.

### **Conclusion**

To this end, one can see in *Hamam: Il bagno turco*, how Orientalism is orchestrated not merely as a means to create lush images, to form a “place of memories and dreams grasped and represented through a (transnationalist and Orientalist) double vision” (Girelli 37), but also to form a tactical bath. Tropes such as “Persian Letters” allow the Western characters to infiltrate the East, symbolized by the bath, if only imaginatively, and control it to assuage their sense of lack of control of their own lives. Furthermore, by using creative and actual acquisition of the bath as a social space of response to strategy (Patriarchy), a practiced space, female characters can attempt to infiltrate and conquer greater Eastern male social space, if only imaginatively and creatively via scopophilia and voyeurism. This latter offers them a more empowering viewpoint, than a side-lined longing glance, into male-space.

From this point, I turn to my final chapter, on the *hammam* of women in Leila Sebbar’s novella *Les femmes au bain*. Here, as in the last two chapters, women use the social space of the bath to not only tactically refute hegemony (Strategy) but also, they use it as a salon where

performative speech creates new images of female history and empowers them to go forth and change their lives.

**Endnote:**

2) “the sexual interest in or practice of spying on people engaged in intimate behaviors, such as undressing, sexual activity, or other actions usually considered to be of a private nature” (Hirschfeld, M. (1938). *Sexual anomalies and perversions: Physical and psychological development, diagnosis and treatment* (new and revised edition). London: Encyclopaedic Press.)

### Chapter Three: Leila Sebbar's *Les femmes au bain*

« J'allais ainsi par les chemins. Jusqu'où? J'ai longé le ravage jusqu'au pays de pharaons. Vous allez dire que je raconte une fable. Oui, c'est une fable, ma vie est une fable. »  
« La petite fille sauvage est devenue une petite fille savant...les femmes le disaient au bain. »  
Leila Sebbar, *Les femmes au bain*

"If the delinquent exists only by displacing itself, if its specific mark is to live not on the margins but in the interstices of the codes that it undoes and displaces...then the story is delinquent."  
"Every story is a travel story; spatial practice"  
Michel de Certeau

#### **Tactical bathing via *kalaam*, *ragot* and "performance art" narratives**

"Tout le jour, la négresse parle. Elle parlait et les femmes écoutaient la conteuse, les mêmes histoires, le même plaisir"

Sebbar's *hammam* in the novella *Les femmes au bain* serves overall as an arena of De Certeau's spatial stories; these being narrations which "traverse and organize places, they select and link them together" (115). "Spatial stories" are tactical; able to be disseminated to define or market a zone as meaningful in a certain manner, which in fact they are in this work, which is a sort of prose-poem. In this novella, an interlinking of narratives told by various women, in a bath, about baths mostly, in an unnamed Muslim *banlieu*, offer tales told as tactics. The performed stories are offered to influence the actions of female bathers, in terms of encouraging them to engage in *fitna*, or to respond with acts of submission, to religious hegemony outside of the *hammam*.

Imaginative stories that the speakers create themselves, as well as seldom-heard, traditional tales told, and retold, in the bath between female bathers about the history of the *hammam* and women's Arabic history and culture, past, present and future, "les mêmes histoires", form its social space into a zone of questioning. The rebellious stories specifically

recount women using the bath as a launching pad for *riposte* against fundamentalist, patriarchal hegemony.

One aspect of these latter tales is that they organize an image of the bath in the bathers' minds as an historic space of feminist dissent, which goes back in time. Specifically these sassy tales that circulate concern *hammams* in Arab folktales, as well as the central bath in the novella. They mostly focus on images of women's infidelity orchestrated in the pools (often instigated by *ragot*, gossip, in baths themselves) and also women travelling freely and educating themselves (and finding other, kind, emancipated women in foreign baths); all forbidden in this Islamicized community Sebbar depicts. In their re-telling of these stories of the bath, *in* the bath, women encourage each other in *fitna*; female troublemaking. In the *bain*, women speak freely, almost too bawdily, mostly of their lovers and how much they despise their controlling husbands.

« Les femmes au bain parlent de lui, l'Aimé. » (12)

« Au bain, je les entends. De qui parlent-elles ? De l'époux ? Non, jamais de l'époux, existe-t-il un seul époux bien-aimé ? »(9)

Tales of the baths, told in the *hammam* in the novella, thus, show it as a zone where women cuckold, or arrange to cuckold, husbands. The effect of this is that the bathers get an impression of the pool as one which links them, imaginatively, with scores of nifty women before them who bathed and also cheated, due to the repetition of bathing tales told here. They feel a sense of interlinking, on an historic plane, with dissention, and they connect it with this social space.

Moreover, spatial stories in this work also serve as links which connect female acts of free-speech, with other specific social areas, where women are allowed to group for supposedly religious occasions. When they visit the cemetery once a year, in a female mass or when they bathe once a week at the bath, they share the same stories. The *ragot* that the women engage in, in these two areas, mostly against men, which "blackens" their mouths, serves to link these social

zones together as spaces of verbal limit-pushing. The women's speech-acts imaginatively widen social space for the women, by connecting smaller spaces of verbal dissent together and tactically, briefly, reclaiming them as their own space of frank talk.

In repetitions of recountings, which show rebellion (*ragot*) women recapture social space, from men, in a tactical manner, via secretive musings, in social spaces which should be more pious (the *hammam*, the cemetery). For this latter point, I will outline how *ragot* in the cemetery-walk and *ragot* in the bath, for instance, bring forth, and link, these social spaces from those which are controlled by religious patriarchy, into those where speech-acts, "every story", become, as de Certeau maintains "spatial practice"(115). These are narratives/speech as "everyday tactics" (115) by which users can organize any space (social or natural) and present its image and history and social meaning to another via speech-acts in and about it.

De Certeau himself allows that "legends...and stories that are told (memories and fiction of foreign lands or more or less distant times in the past)...simultaneously produ(ce)...they make the journey, before...the feet perform it."(116) To this end, narratives spoken amongst pious and impious women -*ragot*, *kalaam* (oral history)- in the bath and about the bath, about women's history, about their own wanderings, about what the *Koran* states regarding women, are attempts (tactics) by speakers (tacticians) to encourage or discourage, women's revolt. Female feet that stand at a threshold from whence they might traverse from a prescribed religious path, to freer destinations, are swayed, or not, by these "spatial stories"(115).

As some of these tales are, additionally, literally travel tales, stories which are "spatial" (those of emancipated, cross-dressed, female nomads for example who encounter baths in their journeys) one sees these speech-acts as spatial practice on multiple levels. These stories are intimately linked with the idea of women having access, or no access, to travel and social spaces.

To be more specific, these accounts are usually not ones of submission, although sometimes these too are also spoken of, instead they are of empowered, wily women who venture from locked quarters, who tactically evade patriarchal oppression. The heroines are those who cuckold their husbands from enclosed *harems* via a home-bath with an invited guest (25), who speak the language of not only men but beasts (26) and in doing so, arrange assignations. One tale concerns a woman who “argues lengthily” to not be forced to marry an old man (66) and her persistence is rewarded.

The results of such disreputable behavior are mixed; sometimes the protagonists are adulated by their clueless husbands, and yet at other times they are decapitated but later, saved by angels (67). Not all the tales involve baths, but many do, and they are told in the bath. Thus, the bath, again, becomes not only a cleansing ritual, but rather, a salon where women, both fundamentalist and freer thinkers, attempt to inculcate impressionable female bathers to woo them to their side of the political aisle. This time not with beauty-product battles such as in Memissi’s pool, but with oral history recountings, fictional performance art narratives, and gossip about female wrong-doing.

In general these stories told *au bain* give the female audience new hope and titillate them with tales of emboldened women. The fresh, politicized thoughts that the “herstories” inspire, then, in turn, re-demarcate traditional religious social boundaries for the listeners by introducing the women to new feminist possibilities for their lives, if only in the women’s imaginations.

In this bath, thus, female bathers confront and debate the limits prescribed to women in Islamic culture via storytelling, folktales and salon-style arguments over Koranic scripture. Due to these speech-acts, the bath becomes a space of societal response. The boundaries prescribed by *sharia* for females, its limitations, open as a result of the feminist narration conducted there

which challenges the *Uma*. This latter is the religious community of Islam, a concept which is not geographically centered, but rather, which is located in every corner of the globe where correct Islam is considered to be practiced and respected.

### **Strategic stories**

In bathing while storytelling in the novella, women create a liminal, temporary, reactionary world out of the ordinary *hammam*. This is similar to Mernissi's bath discussed in the first chapter. It as well became a salon and feminist theater and also a space of tactical response to patriarchal and religious hegemony, besides being simply a bath.

In this space, storytelling between women practices the bath into a theatrical zone which becomes tactical now, due to no longer being a simple social space. The intentional, strategic telling of feminist stories indoctrinates the women and causes them to go into the world with a new agenda. To put this more simply, it changes women's self-perceptions and, in turn, ignites changes in them that will carry on into the outside world. *La bien aimée*, for example, by the end of novel journeys from despair to hope. She "knows" that "je serai enlevée" (84) from familial enchainment and forced separation from the lover by the last page.

*Petit à petit*, with each story imbuing the audience with new visions of female liberation, the bath is turned from that which is functional and mundane- "quotidian"- into that which is transformative and moreover formed and controlled by women unlike, again, much social space in the Maghreb. In this recreated space, new narrative journeys are formed by women, for women, about women whom they have heard of vaguely, yet with curiosity.

« Elle allait de village en village, de ville en ville, de maison en maison....Elle vivait ainsi. Libre. Elle ne voulait pas une autre vie. C'était Cheikha Rimitti » (51-2)

Famous and infamous heroines that are presented as real, but often unspoken of, in the outside Islamic world come to life in bath performance-art by storytellers, such as one sees here in Sebbar's allusion to Cheikha Rimitti. (see endnote 3)

In fictionalizing travel tales from her narrators, and entwining them with non-fictional characters, the tales told here about women, by women, form the bath as an interstice between an imagined world of female audacity, peopled with actual, famous, contemporary women, and reality. This is that of an oppressed, impoverished Muslim neighborhood. In this bath specifically *kalaam* (oral narration, often of folktale narratives for the illiterate,) centered on tales of radicalized women *practice* it into a space of tactical response to patriarchy and re-written Islamic culture. Even the analphabet can join in on the narrative performance, either by telling or just listening. Tales function as a means to bring modern women, to the uneducated, cloistered masses.

The tales become thus "spatial stories": "sayings and stories that organize places through the displacements they 'describe.'" (de Certeau 116) By "displacement" I do not mean physical displacement, as much as social displacement and intellectual displacement. The women, in creating and disseminating their feminist oral literature in the bath, displace themselves from the Uma's social limits, via storytelling. To understand this power of the spatial stories that are re-told in the bath is seminal to comprehending the ultimate meaning of the *hammam's* cultural terrain for the radicalized community of an unnamed Islamic *banlieu* in which *Les femmes au bain* unfolds. Prior to outlaying how *kalaam* and *ragot* function in the text, to create the *hammam* as a space of tactical bathing via bath "performance art" narratives which are political, it is important to understand how one could consider these speech acts as part of tactical bathing and also, "spatial stories". To this end, I will return to De Certeau's terminology.

The bath of Sebbar's novella is a social space made meaningful, and even threatening, for the community through the circulation and invention of enticing stories about it, about what happens in it, and about how being in it affects women. It is so much a hazard that religious radicals have disallowed women from venturing into it "Ces hommes-là ont interdit les bains...les femmes doivent souffrir...jusqu' à la mort" (35). To this end, narratives recounted in the bath where the women can speak "without surveillance" function similarly to narratives about other social spaces that De Certeau states are seminal for forming a society's collective view of a space and identifying its 'owners'/controllers. He coins these types of narratives "spatial stories" (115-130).

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, De Certeau views speech about physical spaces as contributing to creating their physical, and also social, delimitations. "Primary" stories of space work in the same manner as almost the legal doctrine which form them into being later (122). Stories and narrations about place are "as operations on places, stories (are that which) play the everyday role of a mobil and magisterial tribunal in cases concerning (places) delimitations." (122) To put this in another manner, a community's stories about spaces, and the ownership of these zones, create narratives which feed a community's sense of self and a sense of the spaces that cut through it.

To this end, one can see how *ragot* in the bath -joking between women, for example, in the *hammam* which is a religious space for the *Uma*, a discussion of one's husband's cuckolding and a new lover's prowess- (re)creates the bath's space's social delimitations as that which is a zone of audacity from that of respectability and submission. What the bath signifies to the community, what the patriarchy fears occurs between women, via gossiping in the pool (*fitna*) is thus formed by these narratives told there. The *hammam* is collectively established by the social

discourse, the spatial stories, in and about it by both men and women. This circulating web of tales creates its true socio-political dimensions, its breadth of power, and this is stretched to unacceptable (for the *Uma*), by the stories that the women circulate with *ragot* and *kalaam*. The spatial stories in the bath, thus, ultimately contribute to it becoming a space of tactical, feminist bathing.

### ***Ragot, Kalaam***

To be precise, these stories that are told in the bath (gossip, ancient, Arab *contes* about the bath) and personal tales of resistance/ submission to/ questioning of patriarchal, Muslim social structure, contribute to (re)creating social limits in the community in which the bath resides, via the discourse regarding it. These then form the bath's function in the community as a questioning space. It becomes transformed due to the words which are spoken there; to be not a zone of "traditional" Muslim ablutions, but one of feminist activism, resulting from the stories, gossip, narratives, and performative acts that are presented there in its salon-style environment, (see endnote 4).

« Le jour du bain, le plus long de la semaine, le jour le meilleur...De qui parlaient-elles toutes à la fois, l'une interrompant sa voisine, l'autre sa cousine ?...Je viens là, dans ce bain turc, pour les mains et les mots de la plus vieille,...De qui avaient-elles entendu ces contes, les moins populaires parmi les contes arabes ? Qui les avait retenus pour les dire et les redire la ou les femmes parlent sans surveillance ? » (17)

It forms the *hammam* as an occupied zone which answers and calls to hegemony in song-poems and long storytelling sessions. It is also where feminist, educated bathers write with spoken word and reach out to women who are illiterate (11), who respond with enthusiasm and high emotion to illicit poems and love songs.

“Qui peuple poèmes et chansons? L'amour, toujours...les voix pleurent ou elles s'émerveillent.”(11)

Narration thus transforms the bath's social function in the community from religious (ablutions) to *riposte*. This response in the bath involves women's rights and duties in an Islamic world as for example their ability to love whom they wish, whether male or female.

“Ainsi, Remarque une jeune femme, le regard vers les deux femmes endormies, elles n'ont pas entendu...sont-elles impies?... Sa jeune belle-mère lui demande pourquoi elle se préoccupe de la vie et de la mort de ces femmes qui vivent dans le péché.....La jeune fille dit qu'elles se sont endormies l'une près de l'autre....Que mal?”(41)

This questioning of hegemony via bath discourse is of course understood by the Muslim *Uma* which surrounds it; the bath as Sebbar presents it, is a threat. It speaks of feminist conversion to anti-Muslim thought, such as an appreciation of beauty and female beautification, thus, the Muslim community bombs it as a response sometimes (37).

### **Parceled yet liminal social “real estate” and *ragot***

It is moreover a zone which is jealously parceled (separated from greater patriarchal social space) and yet liminal; Muslim patriarchy in this text (as in the first chapter, for the most part, of Mernissi's Fez *harem*) denies women private time in groups and access to greater public social space. Thus, they are set apart by the bath from patriarchy and larger society, but ironically, this results in (like Mernissi's bath) greater Islamic law being eroded by this attempt to sequester women. By convening in groups, they are able to disseminate information faster and effectively. The bath is presented as a type of politicized, valuable social real estate; women only go there once a week, and this is the only day they can speak “sans surveillance” (17).

One can see how “spatial” these stories are (involved with physical places/occasions) in that exiting the home, and rare opportunities for speech, seem to almost be one and the same for some of Sebbar's characters. The *hammam* is where narrative actions, the public telling of lurid and outrageous folk tales “qui ne connaît l'amour malheureux de Antar pour sa cousine Alba...l'amour fou”(11) and sexual gossip (20), as well as many fiery speeches against men, are

shown to meld in the feminist collective minds, with another scarce and highly traditional opportunity for honest talk amongst women in general: the day of the dead. In the novella, we see the social spaces of the bath and the cemetery merging as one collective female social zone of frank talk in one narrator's recollections. In her mind, there is almost no delineation between the two occasions. When she thinks of one, she immediately defaults to another « Les femmes parlent sans surveillance, au bain et aussi le jour de la visite aux morts. » (17)

This latter, the day of the dead, is the one day of the year that they are allowed to go out in groups together. Thus, besides the bath being a space of talk, the cemetery is also an arena where one talks about, and to men (dead men albeit). Space, occasions to inhabit social space with other women, only women, is portrayed in the novel as heavily linked to forbidden speech-acts.

To this end both these spaces, the bath and the cemetery, are inscribed by the outrageous and (ironically non-pious) speech which accompanies them and form their function for the women: For the Muslim community, the point of the bath and the day of the dead visit, is submission and honoring; for them, it is to indulge in lurid *ragot* and a welcome venting about their fates as women in their society.

« Elles parlent, souvent des mots violents, indécents, des mots qui noircissent la bouche d'une femme...elles bavardent et de qui parlent-elles? Des hommes, époux, amants....» ( 20)

Sebbar often melds these two frank speaking-spaces together imaginatively in the novella, in the minds of her narrators, in this text which is more of a prose-poem. It is not a plotted work as much as a series of interior and exterior monologues/conversations between a variety of women and interposed chapters from two major characters: *La Bien-aimée* and her lover *L'étranger du sang* who has been imprisoned by her brothers due to his involvement with her. Interior monologues and conversation and spoken word form the bulk of the text. In the

female bath, as during the *visite aux morts*, the women are shown as sully religious, patriarchal ritual (bath ablutions, cemetery prayers) with insolent sexual *ragot*. It is almost as if the higher level of sanctity and solemnity of the religious aspect and expectations of the traditional bath and cemetery visit, pulls forth from them a desire for rebellious crassness, due to this also being the only time they are able to speak unguarded. They not only speak sexually of the men but they reveal their anger towards men in general and the unfairness of the world.

« Elles parlent....des hommes....pères et frères qui ont détourné l'héritage des absents, des sœurs débiles, des veuves et des orphelins qui personne ne protégé, pas même Dieu? » (20)

In both these places, in the interior monologue of one narratrice, we see zones where women speak with “blackening” words and where they also question the caring, or basic reasonableness and humanity, of God or men (20, 37). This melding between the two talk-spaces ( the cemetery, the bath) one where women can only speak to men who are dead and one where women can speak unguarded about men, but never to them, underline both as arenas where talk has limited power. Although these spaces allow secrecy which gives women some ability to tactically resist hegemony and to communicate ‘with’ it (brag about assignations, complain about their husbands, insult men and in doing so “rebel” and “let it all hang out”) they also disallow direct communication with oppressive forces: they are unable to speak frankly with their husbands, with fathers, or with *imams*.

Thus, secretive talk away from men (narration to an audience of bathers) in the bath, takes the form of *bourrage*; women’s speeches map out the pool’s function in society by marking it as a space which pushes Islamic moral/political/gender limits for women but in a manner that is less aggressive than passive-aggressive and also tactical and somewhat ineffective. Filthy words in these arenas, the bath/cemetery, relieve tension for the female speakers and perform rebellion but don’t directly fix their unequal status; feminist utilization of

parceled speaking-spaces just temporarily alleviates the pain of it. Speech acts that form these spaces are “culturally creative acts” (de Certeau, quoting Pierre Janet 123) but limited in effectiveness.

### **Tactical silence**

The *hammam*'s politicized social sphere joins with the trip to the cemetery and the funereal path on the holiday *aux morts*, as places where, historically, female infidelity is planned and celebrated via *ragot* in *Les femmes* (20, 21). This gossip between female bathers/walkers helps them survive emotionally; it aids them in inculcating naïve young wives to the pleasures of infidelity (and assisting the planning of it amongst savvy ones) and in doing so they are able to encourage others, relieve tensions and help themselves to express agency such as when they speak of their lovers while walking (20).

Gossip, however, has an attendant in even slyer tactical silence. In one instance, La Bien-aimée listens to the bavardage “comme la négresse du bain” at the cemetery.

« Elle entend des histoires d'amours illicites. Elle ne dit rien Elle écoute comme la négresse du bain... L'une et l'autre complices, elles veillent sur les vivants et les morts »(20)

We see, here, another instance of melding together of these two talk-spaces; the listening to the gossip at the tombs, provokes in her a quietude and *active* listening which reminds her of the tactical silence of one of the primary narrators of the bath who figures prominently in the *hammam* and often instructs the women there. “Tout le jour la négresse parle...Elle parlait et les femmes écoutait la conteuse.” (23) I state that the negresse is tactical because she is full of stories- a “conteuse”- yet at times she sagely listens, guards and covets the information that she hears in the bath for her own use, which is not only tactical but political: Women are shown as “rapaces” who often tell other women’s secrets in the community. Here we see how not only

public speaking, but a public display of wise silence, can “instruct” an audience member (in this case La Bien-aimée) in the bath, in how, again, to survive in a patriarchal world.

In acquiring patience and knowledge from *ragot* as “the black woman of the bath”, by saying “nothing”, here the listener is positioned in her interior monologue (stated in third person) as the wise woman herself. We see her self-identification with her -“L’une et l’autre complices”- expressed in her tactical silence which is “like” her, and the words of her simultaneously internal monologue, which twins her, in her mind, with the wise black woman: they are “complicit.” She, like the *negresse*, is between the living and the dead, literally (the lively chatting women who are full of sexual *entendres* and the actual dead of the tomb-walk) and figuratively as well. They both, the *negresse* (due to her race) and she (due to her depression and isolation now that her lover is gone) are marginalized from even the women of the bath. She and (she imagines) the *negresse*, are both “aging” -« Elles veillent sur les vivants et les morts » (20)- and this could be a positive or negative thing; it remains to be seen. This is perhaps aging with cynicism, perhaps with *wisdom*; they age, yet the women to whom they listen frivolously prattle on, and stay young and foolish.

In these above examples of gossip and response in the bath and on the walk of tombs, whether a laddish joking or silence, one sees the women in *Les femmes* taking on various roles due to tactical speech or silence. They can let off steam which has built up from their insular lives by acting like men and gossiping (they just speak of men’s bodies carnally, boldly and in doing so, throw off the assumptions that they are “fidèle” (7) ) or they can “age” and acquire wisdom by stating nothing and by doing so tactically avoid trouble from “rapaces”. Both speech and tactical silence via the bath reforms their own images of themselves as crafty, tough survivors; as bawdy, gossiping fishwives or wise listeners. This gossip, and tactical listening of

it, in the bath, reforms the bath's function, at least for some female community in the bath, from one of religion to one of potentially unwise indiscretion.

### **Scripture, Arab Tales, Tall Tales, *kalaam***

Sebbar's bath is not only a zone for gossip but also a space of re-telling of many genres of literature: Arab folktales, fictional personal narratives and scripture are transmitted from the erudite to the analphabet by *kalaam*; oral narration. This illiteracy of the bulk of the bathers, is evident in many of her passages: "Elles chantent lentement, elles écrivent des vers qu'elles se lisent, si elles ne les écrivent pas elles les disent, les inventant un fil de la parole."(11) One can also assume the bathers' illiterate status, additionally, due to the fact that several speakers stress their education, this is something that the audience must be informed of, so we see that it is not universal for these women. For example one fundamentalist speaker La plus savante is revealed by La bien-aimée as

" celle qui a lu le livre sacré, les dits du Prophète, recensés par les érudites en religion, elle a lu aussi ce que ne lisent les femmes, ce que lisent secrètement les homes pieux, *Le Voyage nocturne de Muhammad*, lui qui le premier, le bienheureux, le meilleur d'entre les hommes, a vu Dieu."(38- 9)

In her awareness of La plus savante's knowledge (her reading of *Le Voyage*) that most women of the bath do not have, we see equality of education in the text as something that has been denied to the bulk of the women in this novella either due to their faith, their gender, or their poverty. Perhaps a few can read but fewer still would be permitted to know of this holy book, which is only allowed to be read by men, which has nonetheless tremendously formed their lives via its outlaying of Muslim law, *Sharia*.

Here we see in this novella, a situation similar to the reality of much of the Muslim world currently: *Kalaam*, instead of reading/writing, is used as an incomplete means to bridge the gap created by illiteracy (Mortimer 302). Analphabet women in this text are thus served, but underserved, by *kalaam*. They are shown as vulnerable due to their over-reliance on *kalaam* in

the novella; they could be taken advantage of by the speakers of the bath as they are unable to know truth from fiction and have no way of proving the scripture that is being told to them, even if they are believers. The continual vying between several bathing narrators for a platform, most obviously *Le plus savante* and *La vieille la plus vieille* in the novella, is partially explained as logical. The bath is a platform for fundamentalist bathers and more liberated ones who both attempt to reach their analphabet audience with *kalaam*.

We could consider the recounting of religious scripture in this bath by one conservative, religious speaker as indoctrinating *kalaam*, especially in terms of how it instructs women to bathe. In a manner similar to Mernissi's bath in the first chapter women are supposed to use the *hammam* for religious and submissive bathing, not for beautifying

« La savante sourit et précise que les anges notent les péchés de la main gauche, elle énumère les femmes qui peuplent l'enfer: les coquettes, les provocantes...les avortées et les avorteuses...elle ajoute que les femmes qui se teignent les cheveux auront le corps enduit de noir. » (40)

In tactically quoting scripture in the bath to sway the bathers towards a kowtowing to religion, to bathe correctly by not using *henna* (les femmes qui se teignent les cheveux auront le corps enduit de noir), La savante uses *kalaam* to trick the women. This duality of the *kalaam*'s function in the work (it is used to instruct women to submit, and, as we will see shortly, also to encourage them to *fitna*) is also demonstrative of Sebbar's frequent use of oral narrative in her works (Mortimer 308) as that which is oppositional; her "orality (which) attests to a strong sense of community and female bonding...at the same time expresses alienation and victimization." (309) In this case orality, *kalaam*, contributes to the bathers' victimization while simultaneously contributing to their emancipation. Scripture in the story is used by speakers to frighten the bathers, yet also the oral tales free them.

For example, *La plus savante* offers the illiterate bathers *kalaam* in the form of horrific stories of the chastisement of women who gossip or bear false witness in *Le Voyage*, which

shows them as hanging from branches and being eaten by vipers. She outlays for them a Hieronymus Bosch scenario in her *kalaam* reading of *Le Voyage* in the bath.

”Voici ce qu’elle peut certifier: les pleureuses professionnelles (Dieu interdit cette pratique) qui ne sont pas repenties seront couvertes d’une matière noire et des vipères les mordront sans interruption....elles seront attachées par le milieu du corps a des bûches suspendues par des chaînes rougies au feu. “(40)

La plus savant, thus, uses *kalaam* to frighten the women and to prevent them from being indoctrinated by the other more liberal speakers. Yet *kalaam* also encourages them.

To be more precise, in the novella, additionally, there are also hints of how the bath might work in Arab literature as a thinly disguised trope of cuckolding that would be a familiar concept to the women who hear stories of it in this bath. By this I mean that several of the bath-stories re-read for the women in this novel via *kalaam*, are of baths where, or by which, women cuckold husbands. There is, for example, a re-telling of the “Tale of the Gazelle “(24-26) an Arab folktale where a woman potentially cuckolds her husband *in a private bath* with a magic gazelle which I will speak of shortly. The bathers themselves, in the novel, also plan assignations via the bath such as I have outlined already in the *ragot* portion where they speak of lovers. The social space of the Arabic bath in the novella, thus, is painted in the *kalaam* and *ragot* amongst the bathers as a type of classic space where women cuckold in Islamic culture. This makes it more understandable, why the community of fundamentalist men, sometimes attempt to destroy it. To repeat well known stories of “the bath” as a space of unfaithfulness, in the bath (“The Tale of the Gazelle”), perhaps would signal to the women that they as well, could utilize the bath, to fulfill/plan assignations and go undetected. The *conte* that the audience of women is told, after all ends happily enough. In *Gazelle* we learn that the husband is none the wiser when he discovers that he has a “son”.

“L’époux a glorifié le fruit des amours légitimes. A-t-il soupçonné sa femme d’amours illicites? On ne sait.” (26)

One could consider this intentional layering of images of the social space of the bath, via *kalaam*, as that which is tactical. It is a place of *fitna*, and specifically that of female infidelity. The telling of a tale of a bath where one is unfaithful, *in* another bath which the women use to plan being unfaithful, and positing one as folktales retold via *kalaam* to the bathers during story-time, is an effort to *inculcate* them. It is not chance that the speaker told this specific tale, one with a bath. One certainly sees this space in the novella, as one where bathers speak often of lovers, as they are enveloped in the warm vapors of the *hammam*. “Le lendemain, assises dans un coin de la terrasse, elles se racontent les femmes et leurs amours, pas une syllabe ne manque.”(23).

The tactical re-telling of this specific tale furthermore by the storyteller, creatively collapses time for her audience and links the bath-listener with a time-line of fictional heroines from the past to the present, by locating the imaginative story in the same, real, loci where one is hearing it. One is in a bath, hearing of other bathers...other cheating bathers...other *successful* cheating bathers...if one is also desiring to be unfaithful, this image is particularly strong.

In doing so, the speaker manipulates her audience to forge for them, an authentic bridge to her fictional personage’s dilemma. One can imagine an unhappy wife in this *hammam*/salon, musing on another, truly emotionally connecting with this tale and linking herself, imaginatively, with a long line of courageous “literary” protagonists who have also utilized the bath as a space for meditating -or acting!- on sexual and emotional urges to be with another and this inflates her confidence and audaciousness. The vivid stories by *La vieille de la vieille* (44-60) which encourage *fitna* will also buoy the women emotionally. These are tall tales about a fantastic life

that she led wandering the world as a cross-dressed nomad meeting famous, emancipated Arab heroines which will be discussed shortly.

### **Folktales**

In the “Tale of the Gazelle”, a woman’s jealous husband builds her a home-bath, so that she is not at the public one, as it is implied, she might get involved with *fitna*, there. “Elle n’allait pas aux bains publics, on avait installé un bain turc dans la maison pour elle seul.”(25) However, despite his efforts to keep her at home, when her husband, content that she will not leave, goes on a hunt, she is left with a pet gazelle which he gives her to relieve her solitude.

“Miraculously”, despite her infertility, she finds herself pregnant and is shown with her gazelle to teach her son to speak “ le langage des bêtes” (26) and to continue to spend time with it, in her *hammam*.

“ La jeune gazelle capturée se promenait dans les jardins, sur la terrasse, buvait l’eau des fontaines, l’accompagnait à son bain quotidien, elles se parlaient dans la langue des sables, l’époux aurait dû la répudier, la jeune femme était séché...on raconte seulement qu’ l’homme de nulle part..a donné à l’amante un garçon...Aujourd’hui elle parle à son fils et à sa gazelle le langage des bêtes, depuis peu elle vient au hammam avec sa servante. » (25-6)

Although it is not directly stated, it is implied, that a man, a lover, infiltrated the bath, the historic space for intrigue, by transforming into a gazelle. To this end, *kalaam* in the bath, again, offers not just an instructive tale, but a tactical one.

In regards to that latter statement, these narratives, told in the bath, are “what they intend to mean” (de Certeau 80); they are thinly veiled stories, thus “they constitute an act which they intend to mean...(not) to wonder what they are a metaphor of” ( de Certeau 80). By this I mean that the tale, which concerns the utilization of a bath to elude one’s spouse, is carefully chosen. The teller utilizes the art of re-telling, oral narration, to suggest to an audience, tactically, what they have as possibilities for dissension. “Or perhaps”, one could imagine the speaker saying “It

is just a fairy tale.” In doing so, the speaker is absolved of responsibility. One has just read too much into a simple tale.

As de Certeau’s “Story Time” where “narration does indeed have a content...it... belongs to the art of making a coup... ( it is) made in order to take advantage of an occasion and to modify an equilibrium by taking it by surprise” (79) here too, in “Story Time” at the bath, we see an attempt by both types of speakers (Le plus savant (fundamentalist), La négresse, La vieille de la vieille ( liberal) ) to use narration to bend their audience in the bath, towards their politicized wills. Just as Le plus savante chooses the best, most horrific stories to frighten the women, so too does La négresse select the most hopeful, and most transparent stories for the women so that there is not concern about not getting the message. The bath indeed, realistically, is a space where they plan intrigues.

### **Feminist fables**

In these narrations, bathers also unfold stories of personal fights and ancient feminist fables that inspire women to delineate the limits of their own lives, such as the long history recounted by “La vieille la plus vieille” (45-56) in the *hammam* which opposes the story of Le plus savante of women who are “chained.” This fable shows women as not only eluding male control but positively taking charge and claiming a type of masculine, reactionary energy, so much that her character is a cross-dresser. We see her, in her tale, dressed in “jeune taleb”, educated by an evolved father and roaming the desert with a dagger at her side (49-50) surviving repeated hardship.

« J’ai mangé dans de pauvres cabanes fermées par des hauts cactus, j’ai dormi contre le mur des marabouts sous la protection du Saint et de la vieille femme accroupie sur le seuil de la porte peinte en vert. »(50)

This long saga has her encountering various famous personages such as Cheikha Rimitti and

sharing time with her, a woman who, like her, did not want to live another life, but a free one (51). She shelters herself with women primarily and also seeks refuge in their baths which, as the “real’ central bath of the novel, is portrayed as a space of female intimacy and solace. The *hammam* is a safe zone for women, especially when men are absent.

“Pour moi, le chemin était encore long. Des femmes riches m’ont accueillie dans leur maison, le mari absent, et je me suis repose sur les dalles chaudes du bain maure dans la ville au bord des vagues.”(52)

Again here we see a bath-tale re-told within a bath similar to the “Tale of the Gazelle”. The layering of the baths, real and fictional, again in the narrative, evokes for the listeners who are hearing this story, in Sebbar’s bath, the comfort that the characters must feel, in the wilderness, when they encounter this familiar space of feminist consolation and forges an emotional link for them with this imaginary, or “celebrity”, woman, who they will never meet. This support is what they too, are feeling, amongst sisters as they listen to the story in the warm, convivial, humid room. The present again collapses back into the past and they, once more, exist imaginatively within the story itself, due to this gradation of the bathing stories which span time and space.

Additionally, we have this image of the pool next to the waves, blending in with the ocean; the *bain maure* is temporary succor but the sea is a reminder that the world waits. The *mari* is gone but as the rich women draw her a bath, the image of the bath as a liminal pool that extends into the ocean, which is a symbol of how far she has come, shows us that this bath is, for her, like the ocean. It extends forever, it welcomes her unexpectedly wherever she travels when she least expects it. The speaker, in her wandering, has grown accustomed to great spaces and yet in her tale one can imagine that she weaves in the bath for the women to reinforce for them its symbolic status as a place of female refuge, specifically emotional asylum.

We see this, in that this bath is also, again, one of talk, and here we see the nomad, the cross-dresser, comforting the women in this fictional bath as they, like the women to whom she is lecturing, speak in the bath of their unhappiness.

“Elles racontent les tristesses conjugales, les séparations, les enfants interdits à leur mère, elles racontaient aussi l’amour, l’époux qu’elles n’aimaient pas, qu’elles devaient subir...”(52)

The bath in her story is now grounded with *les femmes* “real” bath which too is a place where women discuss loneliness and emptiness. However, I read this as hopeful. The message of this parable, of finding a fortuitous *hammam* in which a weary wanderer might soak her feet amongst sisters, is a recounting, which is, again, tactical on the part of the teller. This sisterly travel-tale is a rebuttal against damning scripture. It offers comfort and simplicity in its theme; that no matter where a woman finds herself in the world, in the *hammam* one can tell one’s troubles to another woman...or better still, one can leave one’s troubles and travel like a nomad to still find oneself amongst sisters. The crux, in this last tale in the bath for these women, being of course liberating; you must seek to leave this place of comfort because you will find it again on any journey.

In this liberating *kalaam*, “magic” stories such as cross-dressing, “becoming a man” and bathing nomadically, and exotic encounters with lovers via a sly use of a home bath, present the female audience with images of trespass which encourage their emotional emancipation and, again, embolden them to pursue true passions; whether this be a life of authenticity, such as in the Tall Tales, or in obtaining, again, a lover, via the Arab tales. Additionally, the recurring images of the *hammam* in this *kalaam*, as a social space which assists women in gaining emotional equilibrium and aids them in finding happiness (begetting children, obtaining lovers, seeking sisterhood), works as a trope to ground the tales in a life experience that they have familiarity with. This image of the bath as a space of fortitude, in *kalaam* and Tall Tales, should, after multiple retellings ignite expectations, at the mere mention of the bath in a story, of what is

to come: tales of resistance. For the speakers thus there is a tactical presentation of this trope: This is an image that the women recognize and respond to. For the listeners, speech-acts, *kalaam* and *ragot* in the bath of *Les Femmes au bain*, practice the space from one of practicality and submission to Islam, to one of a politicized, social theater.

**Endnote 3:** Rimitti was an immensely popular Algerian singer, who was still audaciously performing at a late age, releasing her last album at 83. Her last performance was to 4000. Her musical style, a hybrid of rock and traditional Algerian music, was a type of tactical response itself, to Islamic, fundamentalist hegemony.

“Rimitti caused a sensation with the release of *Charrak Gattà* a daring hit record, which encouraged young women to lose their virginity and which scandalised Muslim orthodoxy. Her outlook and songs did not endear her to the nationalist forces fighting for freedom from French rule during the [Algerian War of Independence](#) who denounced her for singing *folklore perverted by colonialism*.”  
([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheikha\\_Rimitti](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheikha_Rimitti))

**Endnote 4:** To situate it anecdotally, one could almost think of Sebbar’s bath as similar to the “Occupy” parks and plazas in America. By a politicized sub-population (Occupy Movement) staking a claim at a prior spot which was “marked” by a politicized-and oppositional- sub-community (such as the financial community, Wall Street, Banks) and responding to it with narrations (such as signs and sit-ins) in the zone, the conversation in the space changes the social “meaning” of the venue for the greater public. What once was a financial “place” for the 1% now stands for the 99%. Feminist narration and conversation in the bath (this latter both verbal and non-verbal; silent, as one will also see women just listening in agreement, afraid to vocalize their support) works in a similar manner in the novella

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